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Under the Empire.

UNDER THE EMPIRE;

OR, THE

Story of Madelon.

BY

J. B. H.

James Barron Ho

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A WORD TO THE READER.

Ordinarily, a preface to a little book like this would be out of place, but there are one or two circumstances which justify me in claiming the attention of the reader for a moment.

This trifle—confessedly sensational in name and structure—was intended as a holiday book, but the best laid plans of authors and mice are not unfrequently deranged. Delay in securing the paper needed, and an error as to the kind ordered, threw the Story of Madelon out of the Christmas market, since when it has been printed very leisurely.

So much for its late appearance, and now one other word: The original exists in the shape of a MS. play—duly copyrighted—and this will account for the lack of color in the work, as also for its "stagey" treatment in certain passages.

With this introduction, which I could hardly have made shorter, I submit the Story of Madelon to the public, with the remark, that, as Bulwer says, the "highest compliment you can pay a man is to buy his book."

J. B. H.

Norfolk, Va., February 15, 1878.

"Well! it is now publique, and you wil stand for your priuiledges we know: to read and censure. Do so, but buy it first. * * * * Iudge your sixe pen'orth, your shillings worth at a time, or higher, so you rise to the iust rates and welcome. But whateuer you do, Buy."

Inscribed

to

* * *

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Under the Empire.

"Je vous l'ai deja dit: tout le secret des armes ne consiste qu'en deux choses, a donner et a ne point recevoir; et, comme je vous fis eoir l'autre jour par raison demonstrative, il est impossible que vous receviez si vous savez detourner l'epee de votre ennemi de la ligne de votre corps; ce qui ne depend seulement que d'un petit mouvement du poignet, ou en dedans, ou en dehors."

—LE BOURGEOIS GENTILHOMME.

CHAPTER I.

AN UNPREMEDITATED DUEL WITH BUTTONS ON THE FOILS.

In the days when the great Napoleon was treating the crowned heads of Europe very much as Moliere's Maitre d'Arms did the Masters of Music, Philosophy, and Dancing—that is, illustrating his power *per raison demonstrative*—there lived in a narrow street of Paris an old soldier who gave lessons in the art of fencing. His school was well attended, because, while the pupils admired their Master, they admired his fair daughter Madelon still more.

In those days the noble art of running your neighbor

through the midriff was extensively cultivated by all civilized people as a necessary part of a liberal education, and the school of Pierre Deslond was rarely without a throng of young Frenchmen, ambitious to excel in this manly accomplishment.

The gloomy hall where he gave his lessons was hung round with foils, masks, and plastrons, the effect of which was rendered picturesque by a liberal display of tri-colored ribbons, arranged by the hands of his daughter.

The morning soon shone upon the yellow walls, and the gay-colored streamers, grouped about the implements of the Fencing Master's art vindicated, in their warmth of color, the taste of the fair young creature by whom they had been arranged. Otherwise the room looked bare, and spoke of poverty.

In the midst of this apartment stood the old soldier. His profession was indicated alike in his dress and action, and the time had been when few handsomer fellows could be found under the tri-color than Pierre. His figure was erect, his grey hair ample, his brown cheeks had a deep color, almost hectic in its flush,

and his brilliant black eyes glowed with an unextinguished fire.

Suddenly he took down a foil, and drew himself up in a stately attitude. Then slowly and with profound gravity he saluted an imaginary antagonist, and called out in a loud voice: "*En garde, Monsieur!*"

Then, with incredible fire and agility, the old man engaged the antagonist conjured up by his own fancy. This combat with the air he continued for some minutes, with a grotesque fervor that made him look like a French Quixote, mad on the subject of fencing.

At last he paused, drew a long breath, and as an expression of deep sadness settled on his face, Pierre Deslond spoke aloud: "Ah, old man, your force fails you! Your limbs move like the lock of a rusted musket."

His tone was pathetic. It was the lament over his lost youth; but it was something more: It conveyed the cares of an anxious and tender father—for as his head sank upon his breast he continued: "And what, then, becomes of Madelon when I can no longer wield a foil?"

This mournful soliloquy was interrupted by a fit of coughing, in the midst of which a door opened and his daughter stepped into the room.

Her close fitting gown, of dark blue stuff, showed her graceful figure from drooping shoulders to well-arched instep. Her eyes were dark and soft and tender, and her cheeks of a warm rose-color. Her hair was lustrous and thick, and her mouth as frank and sweet as that of a little child. Madelon was fair in face and graceful in person, but her chief charm was in her innocent expression.

For a moment she stood in the doorway, which made a gloomy frame for so bright a picture; then she came forward and laid her hand upon the old man's arm. Looking up at the Fencing Master, she said:

"You are not well to-day. Put off your lessons. Come, now, be a good father, and listen to Madelon."

The old man stroked her glossy hair and kissed her forehead before he answered:

"Not so, my child! I must work—every day is precious, and if I shut up my school one day, *Mon Dieu!* the school may shut up itself next."

And the Fencing Master smiled gaily at his own conceit.

"But," continued the girl, "I can help you; if you will but let me work for you your task will not be so hard."

As she said this, the fair young creature looked up in Pierre's face with a smile of inexpressible tenderness.

"Ah, you would work for me!" said the old man, dropping his foil and placing both hands on her shoulders, as he looked down fondly in her upturned face, "Ah, my child! it is little that such hands as yours could do!"

"Oh!" cried Madelon, "you are wrong. The good Sisters taught me many things, and they told me that my lace was beautiful—that was the word—that I might be able to sell much of it, and so help us to live."

An angry flush mounted to the Fencing Master's cheeks as he answered: "And so the 'good Sisters' put this notion in your head, did they? May the devil take them!"

An expression of pain came into Madelon's face; she

stretched out her hands and cried: "Take back that wish!"

"To please you, yes; and since I think of it, the Sisters are good women. After all, it is only the Priests I hate."

"And why, my father? They have done no harm to us."

"Done us no harm! Done France no harm! I am not so certain of that. I knew them for fellows not to be trusted. They are knaves and hypocrites. Here's that Father Felix, a miserable drone in the hive; but he sets all the women crazy with sham charities and soft words!"

What the girl would have said, by way of reply, was cut short by the entrance of two new actors on the scene. These men had never met before; they had hardly looked at each other in entering the hall, but Fate had bound their destinies together, and to-day they encountered each other to begin the drama for which they had been cast.

The first who entered was Monsieur Alphonse Desselais. He was the son of a rich contractor, and his

chief ends in life were to excel in fashion and escape the conscription. He was fantastically dressed, and deported himself with insufferable arrogance. In person he was small, but it was easy to see that he was a great personage in his own estimation.

The man who followed him was in a military frock, apparently a subaltern officer, and a straight-forward, frank-looking soldier was Louis Marot.

As these two men entered the hall, the old Fencing Master bent forward and kissed his daughter, not heeding the new comers. This sweet and tender scene excited the humor of Desselais, who, coming forward, cried out, "Ah, Monsieur Deslond, I see the old war-horse has not forgotten the scent of new hay!"

"This girl," said Pierre, "is my daughter Madelon, and you jest of her at the peril of broken bones."

Without heeding the stern address of the old soldier, Desselais cried out, in affected surprise: "And it is you, Madelon, is it? I was blinded by the change from the light without. Had I seen your face I could have fallen into no error, for it is engraved upon my heart: I swear to you it is!"

This speech was accompanied by a smile, which the amiable Alphonse condescended to make in a happy combination of insolence and idiocy.

Turning from him with a cold and stately air—the air which a pure woman unconsciously assumes in the presence of a libertine—Madelon moved towards the archway by which she had entered. Nothing daunted, Desselais sprang forward; the old soldier gripped the button of his foil, half inclined to break it off and run his pupil through; but Marot, anticipating the man of fashion, stepped forward, threw open the door, and Madelon disappeared.

Unabashed, Alphonse kissed his hand and cried out after the fugitive: "Ah, Madelon! you do not forgive me—revenge should perish in such a bosom as yours!"

Then he kissed his hand again and made a grimace which was intended for a captivating expression of gaiety. From his contemplation of the door, for to this his fine speech and graceful gestures had in reality been delivered, he turned to Marot and surveyed him insolently from head to foot.

At this moment the speech which he meditated was

cut short by the Fencing Master, who looked him in the face with eyes so full of meaning that his own fell under the soldier's gaze. "Monsieur Desselais," he said, "you have seen a good girl"—

"I am prepared to swear it!" cried Alphonse.

"And of a sweet temper, but not one to listen to fine speeches. Forget I have a daughter."

Desselais fell back before the severe glance of the Maitre d'Arms, who turned to Marot with a grave and stately air, saying, "And you, Monsieur, what can I have the pleasure of doing for you?"

"My story is soon told," said the youth, "I came to profit by your instructions. A soldier cannot know too much of his trade."

"Ah!" cried Deslond with enthusiasm, "That is well said! A true soldier cannot know too much of his trade! And you have seen service, too; that is good also!"

"Yes, I have served under the Eagles. I was first under fire in Italy as a lad."

"And your name, comrade, your name?" cried Deslond, embracing him with sudden warmth.

"Louis Marot, a name little known, but one borne on the muster-rolls of France."

"You are thrice welcome, Comrade." And again the Fencing Master embraced his new pupil.

At this moment a tumultuous crowd of gay young men poured into the room; at their head came Dr. Lavoison, a young surgeon, whose chief end in life, as he assured his friends, was to cultivate a good digestion. The troop saluted the Fencing Master in chorus: "Ah, how does my brave friend? How fares Captain Deslond?"

With these and a score of other questions and compliments the Fencing Master's pupils gathered about him. The old man was now radiant with delight: the event of the day for him was now about to begin. There was much trampling of feet and rattling of steel as the fencers prepared themselves for the contest.

Desselais, who had been silent since his rebuke, now came forward, and with mock solemnity addressed himself to Marot. The tone in which he spoke was one of studied insolence. Clearly these men were in a fair way to become enemies.

"Monsieur," he said, "may I beg that one whose name is borne on the rolls of France will condescend to cross swords with me."

"If I may judge of your manner," replied Marot, "the condescension is on your side; but I am at your command."

"You are very gracious," cried Desselais. "It is an honor to meet a hero of Italy on such familiar terms. Will you be so good as to take your plastron and mask.

"I shall leave them on the wall."

"Take my advice: you will need them."

"That we shall see."

"I give you fair warning. I am a hard hitter."

During this dialogue the Fencing Master and his pupils, lately so noisy, had grown silent. The two men had surrounded themselves with a sinister atmosphere, which had made itself felt by the entire company. What they thought in a vague way was partly expressed by Dr. Lavoison, who said to his neighbor, the rosy-cheeked Henri: "Here has been some sharp-tongue fencing already. Let us see if it

is not followed by some hard hitting. Faith, the stranger seems to know his business!"

Desselais glared through the wires of his mask like a rat in a cage. Marot stood like a piece of Greek sculpture.

The Fencing Master renewed his youth. The silent company gathered in a ring about the combatants. They saluted. They engaged. The click and whirr of the slender steel blades rose with a clean, penetrating sound above the trampling of feet, and the spectators felt their cheeks growing hotter as the quick thrusts and passes were exchanged. Desselais was a good swordsman, but it was plain that he had met his master. The coolness of his antagonist inflamed his anger, and he delivered his thrusts with fury, grinding out an oath now and then between his teeth.

"Is it not superb!" cried the Fencing Master. "Listen to the music of the steel! Ah! Comrade you did not fight in Italy without learning something!"

At each of his furious assaults Desselais felt that

his failures were received with pleasure by the spectators. He grew mad with rage. The blood rushed to his head. He plunged forward determined to make the hit of which he had boasted in advance. A loud shout of laughter rang in his ears, and he found himself half stunned upon the floor. As his senses came to him he beheld the face of Madelon in the doorway, and then tears of rage shut out the picture. Never had there been such an uproar in the hall before. The laughter seemed to Desselais to be unending. Without voice, and trembling in every limb, he regained his feet. His eyes no longer glittered like those of a rat; they blazed like those of a tiger. As he gained the door a peal of laughter, more uproarious than any which had before stabbed his vanity, broke upon his ears, but of the full reason of this mad shout the wretched Desselais was as yet in happy ignorance—in his fall his breeches had suffered irreparable damage.

As the gay company he left behind him regained their breath, they broke forth each one in cougratulations to Marot, and in commentaries on Desselais, who

was not the man to make friends among his associates. "Ah!" cried one, "Alphonse has always boasted his invincible attack. This exhibition of it was superb."

"Yes," responded another, "he went *in medias res*, and reminded me of a frog I once saw in the country, which jumped into a pond as I approached it—Alphonse, like the frog, went head foremost."

"I think he said he was a hard hitter. Did he not? And, faith, did he not make good his word? His head gave the floor a rap that made the walls shake."

"And," cried Lavoison, "he went out of action like a crippled frigate with a flag-of-truce flying at the poop. Come, let us follow him!"

On this hint the laughing group poured out tumultuously from the room, leaving Madelon, Marot and the Fencing Master in possession of the scene.

CHAPTER II.

SHOWING WHY LOUIS MAROT CALLED ON PIERRE DELOND.

The loud and Merry laughter ceased, and the last sounds of retreating footsteps died away. The face of Pierre was still wet with involuntary tears called up to his bright eyes by the absurd disaster which had overtaken Desselais.

Madelon's lips were still parted by a smile, and her black eyebrows arched in sympathy with her unspoken question, for she but half understood the scene she had witnessed.

Marot alone seemed occupied with the present. The plastron, mask, and foil, which his antagonist had dashed on the floor, he replaced methodically on the wall. Then he drew near the old man and his daughter.

"Faith! Comrade," cried Pierre, "you need no instruction from me! You are my master, but I forgive you freely; your punishment of Desselais deserves our thanks. But where learned you that trick? I have

practiced trips against scores and hundreds of men, but such as that I never saw! You shot him across the floor as if he had been sent out of a mortar!"

And overcome at the recollection of the scene, the Fencing Master broke forth in another peal of laughter. It was contagious; his companions joined him, and they laughed in chorus, none the less heartily because each one of the group realized—so quick sometimes are our intuitions—that their mirth was at the expense of an enemy.

"Where learned I the trick? In Normandy. It is common there among the village lads; but I should fear to try it with an old soldier like yourself."

"Nay! nay!" cried the Fencing Master, "I am like a sword rusted in the scabbard. The rheumatism has laid its hand upon my joints and I am no more fit for active service than a musket made by contract."

Then Madelon spoke. Her words were few, but they were animated by a pardonable pride. "And, father, you might plead your honorable wounds!"

Marot started at her voice, and, as for the tone in which she spoke—imagine a violet turned into a bell

and rung with a silver hammer. It smote at once the ears and heart of the young soldier.

"What!" cried the old man, "you here! You must within. Monsieur and myself will talk here. Kiss me, my child, and go."

At this Marot stepped forward, his carriage erect, his eyes clear and honest, his face reddened with a blush. Evidently he had something of gravity to say, and he spoke quickly, in the tone of a man who knew his own purpose:

"Hold!" cried Marot, "I am a plain man, not courtier enough to make fine speeches, but I know how to tell the truth. I did not visit you so much to handle a foil as to speak of your daughter. You see I am outspoken!"

The old man drew back, and his face lost its color, but he made no reply. He was stunned and bewildered. As for Madelon, her face was red with blushes and her eyes cast down.

"Yes," continued Marot, "I came to speak of your daughter. We are almost acquaintances."

These words shot a strange pang through the old man's heart, as he exclaimed:

"Almost acquaintances! That is strange."

"Madelon," said the soldier, "do you remember my face?"

She looked up with her frank, bright eyes, and answered: "Yes, I remember."

"Comrade," cried the old man, growing still paler and trembling a little as he spoke: "You have excited me. I am no lover of mysteries; speak out. What does this mean?"

"Nay, there is no mystery," answered Marot, still looking at Pierre with an honest glance; "there is no mystery. My regiment was once quartered near the villa of M. Baudin. I saw your daughter on her last visit to her friends. Since that I have seen her in Paris. She is well spoken of. I admire her. My intentions are worthy your confidence. I have a modest fortune. You have the whole story."

Before Marot had made an end of his speech, which, rugged and abrupt as it was, fell like music on the young girl's ears, she had disappeared within the

doorway; but he spoke in a loud tone, and she heard him to the end.

The old soldier was painfully agitated. He was bewildered and depressed. The fear which he had resolutely put away, had been suddenly thrust upon him. The compliment sounded almost like an injury. He passed his hand across his forehead and looked at Marot with wistful eyes. "Young man," said he, "you have an honest face."

"And I trust an honest heart."

Then the Fencing Master turned away with a sigh: "Go," he said, "leave me awhile, I must bring myself to think of this, and the girl has to be consulted—a good, sweet girl!" and the old soldier moved further from his companion, to hide the tears with which his cheek was wet. When he looked up he was alone: Marot had noiselessly departed. Then the Fencing Master disappeared within, in search of Madelon.

CHAPTER III.

"HALF MONKEY, HALF TIGER."

When the pupils of the Fencing Master reached the street Desselais was still visible, and apparently unconscious of the aptness of the figure in which it had been hinted that his apparel was much the worse for his encounter. The shouts of his companions brought him to a halt, but his face was so inflamed with rage, and his gestures so full of fury, that a youth, somewhat wiser than his fellows, suggested that it was a pity to spoil so good a jest by turning it into earnest.

But Dr. Lavoison, unheeding the hint, flew towards the exasperated son of the contractor.

As he disappeared with his victim, Henri cried out: "Adieu! hot-head; to-morrow we shall find you at the hospital."

Such was the conclusion of the group, for Desselais,

as a man of fashion, had been engaged in several affairs beyond the barriers, and had proved himself a skillful swordsman. But of this the incorrigible Lavoison neither thought nor cared.

Ignorant of prudence, he seized Desselais, and brought him to a halt by sheer superiority of strength.

Then, affecting great exhaustion, he cried out: "Hold! we have distanced the whole school! Halt, oh! most impetuous battering-ram! Let me draw breath!"

Desselais fairly trembled with rage, but there were several reasons why he did not care to quarrel with his reckless companion, and he was cool enough to feel a painful curiosity to hear from Lavoison what had been said of his disaster. Hence his reply was more moderate than accorded with the scowl upon his face.

"Let us not trifle," he said, "I am in no mood for it."

"Pray be amiable," cried Lavoison, "and tell me what there is so offensive in my classic image of a battering-ram?"

"There is this in it," replied Desselais, "you study

to offend me, and I tell you if you persist in it, I will run you through!" and the irritated dandy swore frightfully as he spoke.

"You must permit me to decline that honor," replied the dector; "my trade is to heal wounds on others, not on myself, and your threat to such a friend as I have been to you is sheer ingratitude!"

"If you are my friend, then leave me to myself. I tell you I am in no mood to be trifled with."

Dr. Lavoison's face assumed an aspect of great solemnity; he inflated his chest, and elevated his chin as he answered, rather as if by soliloquy than an address to his companion: "*If* I am your friend—*if* insinuates a doubt, and the doubt wounds me. There is no hypothesis about it, for look you! Desselais, am I not poor? Are you not rich? Do I not borrow your money, drink your wine? Are not these proofs of friendship? You have had them in the past, and I am willing to sacrifice myself in the future, so if me no ifs."

"Then, friend, leave me," was the answer.

"You are ungrateful. I go. You will lament it, for you will never hear what was said of you when you

disappeared. And Madelon was there; but I go. Adieu."

Slowly Dr. Lavoison turned from his companion, but he had not removed a yard, when he felt the hand of Desselais upon his arm, and this question was hissed in his ear:

"And she was there?"—then, with passion, to himself—"Yes, I saw her face. I see it now!"

"Yes," replied Lavoison, "she saw it all; but, as a crowning proof of my friendship, I leave you."

"Hold! not so!" cried his companion. "Yes, I remember. And so she witnessed my accident?"

"Accident? You do well to call it by that name! You prove yourself to be a wise man. The world is a great believer in fine names. The self-same fact has a score of names; each one finer as you go up in the scale of society. You are right to call it your—accident."

"Yes," cried Desselais, "with eager volubility; "yes, undoubtedly, an accident! You see, Lavoison, when I made my thrust the foot unluckily slipped, and so I got that damnable fall. Otherwise I had hit him

fairly in the chest. Curse him! I could tear him to tatters! But he has not heard the last of this! trust me for that!" And he stamped upon the ground to emphasize his threat.

The aspect of the infuriated fop was so grotesque that Dr. Lavoison laughed aloud.

"Are you an idiot?" cried Desselais. "Are you an ass, that you bray in this fashion? At what do you laugh?"

"Is it possible that you are ignorant of the extent of your—accident? When you left us they said you resembled—pardon me if I laugh—that you—Ha! Ha! Ha!—resembled a crippled frigate going out of action with a flag of truce flying at the poop. Do you understand?"

As Desselais realized the allusion of his tormentor, the expression of his face showed how the scenes of the Revolution had been possible in France. The Devil, in personal command of a legion of evil spirits, seemed to look out through his eyes, as he whispered, with white lips: "Let us away to our lodgings! I am sufficiently degraded already."

There was a concentration and depth in his passion,

which, for a moment, overawed his companion, who, as he said of himself afterwards, had "looked through Desselais' face rather deeper into hell than suited his fancy."

Turning into a narrow street of a dark and forbidding aspect, for those were the days of "old Paris," they hurried along at a rapid gait, until Desselais recognized the gloomy house of which he was in search. He shot through the lodge, followed by the wondering gaze of the *concierge*, who, winking one eye at Dr. Lavoison, shrugged his shoulders, spread out his hands, elevated his eyebrows, and ejaculated in a confidential whisper: "Ah! yes, I see Monsieur has a patient! Mad! yes, that is obvious; but"—here the *concierge* made a bow—"he must make a speedy recovery under Monsieur."

This speech, to which his companion was insensible, still further disturbed Dr. Lavoison's equanimity, and he followed his friend toward the roof under which he lodged, laughing at the porter's diagnosis.

At the last landing place he found Desselais waiting for him. A great change has taken place in this

young person's appearance. He was grim, silent, concentrated, and a wicked light shone in his eyes—a steady, fierce glow, full of a sinister meaning.

"Come," said he, "let us within; I have need of you."

"A thousand welcomes," cried Lavoison, as he threw open the door of his apartment.

This commanded a fine view of the tiles and chimney pots, and perpetually reminded him, as he said, of the adventures of the Spanish student pictured by Lesage."

The room contained a few chairs, a great array of books, a few retorts on a rickety table, which threatened to come down at any moment with its frail burthen. An alcove, cut off from the room by an Indian screen, which had once been brilliant in grotesque figures, accommodated the Doctor's bed, and a cavernous closet contained his wardrobe. Desselais threw himself into a great chair, and groaned aloud.

"That," cried Dr. Lavoison, "is a good sign." "Your silent fellows are those who die under sharp surgery."

As he spoke he opened a buffet, and drew forth a bottle; having flanked this with a couple of glasses. he proceeded to uncork it with exceeding care. His task ended, he threw himself into a chair and glanced at his companion: his look changed into a study.

"*Peste!*" said he to himself, as he surveyed the silent dandy: "he is a Voltarian Frenchman, half monkey, half tiger—distracted by the recollection of his torn breeches, and by a contemplated homicide. Yes, he divides himself between his tailor and his undertaker. Clearly, this is serious."

The expression of Desselais' face and figure justified these reflections. His gay apparel was disarranged. He crouched rather than sat in the chair, into which he had flung himself, and gnawed his nails in a fit of savage abstraction.

Suddenly Desselais looked up, and encountered the gaze of his host. A flush mounted to his forehead. It was a mortification to undergo the inspection, and to relieve himself, he started to his feet.

"You have had bad dreams," said Lavoison, "if one may judge from the expression of your face."

"You are wrong," cried Desselais, with energy; "dreams of revenge are always pleasant."

"Bah! let us forget it!" replied the Surgeon. "Come! you have not tasted my wine. As an honest man, I cannot praise it, but we might find worse."

"Forget it? No. But the wine, yes—I will drink your health."

Desselais drained his glass like a man in a fever. Lavoison sipped his with decorum.

"Now, then," said his guest, "make me more presentable."

"That will be my great pleasure," replied the Doctor, throwing open his closet. "Here you will find what may serve your purpose.

Without further ceremony Desselais began to make a selection from the wardrobe of his friend.

"Breeches are there," said the Doctor, "and stockings, I think; yes, you will find stockings; and, Desselais, a sumptuous gown, which my estimable aunt sent me on my birth-day. Array yourself, my friend, like Solomon. All you behold is yours!"

Then, throwing himself back in his chair, Dr. La-

voison refilled his glass, nodded to the closet door which stood ajar, and continued, thinking aloud: "A precious apartment, truly, for the elegant Desselais. Faith! I think my legs must be longer than his by at least three inches. Here's to the health of my virtuous and heroic friend—otherwise the battering-ram!"

At this sentiment the head of Desselais appeared emerging from the closet, and he cried out in a sharp tone: "Ah! what is that?"

"I am drinking your health," replied Lavoison "May your success be equal to your merits! Have you made your toilet? Step forth man! Forward, march."

Obedient to the word of command, Desselais presented himself. His attitude was grotesque, his appearance absurd. He blushed with shame and vexation as he cried out: "Ah! behold these breeches have to be rolled up till I look like a fisherman of Marseilles!"

Dr. Lavoison surveyed him for a moment, and then fell, laughing, into the chair from which he had risen to examine the man of fashion in his new costume.

Desselais shuffled to the window and gazed out at the chimney pots through eyes dim with tears, for he felt himself the victim of a great misfortune. Positively he found it necessary to snuffle and then to cough. These sounds arrested the mirth of Lavoison.

Then Desselais spoke in a voice that trembled, and was almost sad. His words were uttered with dignity, and his host felt himself rebuked. "Monsienr," he cried, "you violate your hospitality. I am your guest, and yet you study to offend me; I should be an idiot not to understand it."

These words pierced the generous Lavoison, and he cried out: "I study to offend you? Not so. Pardon my laughter, and remember—have I not told you I am your friend? Believe me I have no desire to feel cold steel under my ribs. Pish! man, if you *must* quarrel, seek out the young soldier. It is his trade to fight. My business is to heal wounds, not to make them."

In this speech the Doctor innocently applied the fire to the flax—the match to the powder.

Desselais turned from the window, his cheeks red,

his eyes in a flame, and exclaimed, raising his clenched hand above his head: "Yes, you have said it. You have spoken my resolve! Seek him out! Let there be no delay!"

It was too late to reason. Lavoison saw this at a glance, and, shrugging his shoulders, drew forth a writing table, at which Desselais sat down with an air of savage exultation; in his fancy he had already killed Louis Marot.

"Make it brief," said Lavoison, "and I will find your man; but reflect before you send it that it is a serious thing to kill a fellow creature, and still more serious—to be killed oneself."

To this Desselais paid no regard, writing on to the end with a steady hand. Then the two men read over the note. Dr. Lavoison thrust it into the breast of his coat, and sallied out in search of the young soldier.

CHAPTER IV.

A NEW ACTOR COMES UPON THE SCENE.

Louis Marot was in happy ignorance of the storm he had raised in the bosom of Desselais, but even had he been aware of the sanguinary purpose of that person, he was professionally so enured to arms and dangers, that it would not have disturbed the smile with which he pursued his way on leaving the Fencing Master. As it was he walked free of care and full of hope. The picture of the young girl whom he loved was in his mind. Fair as she was, with all a lover's pardonable warmth of fancy, he exaggerated her charms, and it was this image which parted his lips with the pleasant smile they wore as he strode towards his quarters. He had forgotten Desselais.

Suddenly, and while still within sight of the tall house where the Fencing Master taught and lived, four floors above the *conciergerie*, Louis Marot felt a hand upon his arm. At the touch his picture dissolved in air. The person who had joined him was an

old man clad in a suit of brown. His eyes were bright, his step firm, and his cheeks ruddy. His face was remarkable for its repose. His air was that of a man who had spent his life in good thoughts, among good books, and in the midst of good actions. Marot's friend, for such he evidently was, brought the young soldier to a halt, and their hands met in a warm grasp.

"You here?" cried the old man. "I thought you were busy among the troops?"

"Yes, here I am, as you see; and you? what brings you here, and out of uniform?"

The old man smiled, as he answered: "My troops are everywhere, and my uniform, as you call it, is not very popular, so that on some occasions it is convenient and useful to lay it aside. But you have not answered me: what brings you in this *quartier?*"

"It is a good omen that I met you," answered the youth, "I will confess, and then you shall advise me."

"I am always ready to listen to my friends," said the old man, and the benevolence of his countenance showed that his words were not spoken without reason.

Louis Marot's face glowed with pleasure—the pic-

ture of Madelon came back to him, and he was glad to have a listener. "The story is an old one," said the youth, "a very old story, and a woman is at the bottom of it."

"It might have a worse foundation," said his companion, with a humorous twinkle in his eyes, "and this woman is young and pretty?"

"Yes, young and pretty, and I have taken it into my head that I am in want of a wife."

"A wise resolve!" cried the old man, "a virtuous woman makes a good man's household happy; but there are those who say that soldiers ought not to marry."

"And I confess that I have been of that opinion myself," replied Marot, "maybe have said as much to you; but then I had not seen Madelon—that makes all the difference!"

"And who is Madelon?"

"The daughter of a Fencing Master; we are within sight of his residence now."

"Ah, ha! the daughter of Pierre Deslond!"

"You know her, then?" cried Marot, siezing his companion by the arm.

"No," said the old man, "no; but I know those who speak praises of her. She has been well nurtured, and is a good girl. Of that I am assured."

"And you who seem to know all things, can you tell me of her father?"

"I am told," replied the old man, "that he is a strange mixture of paternal tenderness, martial enthusiasm and profanity, especially set against the Priests; but an honest man. Now, question for question, how came you to meet this enchantress?"

"The story is simple enough. I saw her at the villa of Monsieur Baudin, the great banker, it is now six months ago. She is cousin to his wife. I should have pressed myself on her notice then—but faith! the Minister of War breaks up romances. He arrested mine by sending me to the South of France, from which I have just returned. To-day I became a pupil of her father, and told him my story. You see I have lost no time."

At this moment Madelon came forth from the porter's lodge of the gloomy house at which they had been gazing. She was evidently in haste. Marot

sprang forward to meet her. She answered his unspoken question: "My father is ill," she said, choking back her tears, "and I am in search of Dr. Lavoison."

Then, as the youth indicated his intention to accompany her, she waved him off and cried, "No, no. Pardon me; I am in haste." Perhaps she reproached Marot as the cause of the Fencing Master's illness, for women are not just when moved by their emotions.

In a moment more the young girl was out of sight.

"I am sorry for this," said the old man, taking a prodigious pinch of snuff. "It has been known to me for some time that Deslond is failing, and he must be looked after."

"Here," cried Marot, "is my purse, use it without stint."

"No," replied his companion, putting it aside with a graceful gesture, and pressing the hand which offered it, "no, I have a fund at my disposal; but if I should need aid your offer will not be forgotten; and now adieu, unless you may be going my way?"

"No," said Marot, "I shall await the return of Madelon, and mount guard here."

Pressing each other's hands the two friends separated. The old man still wearing his air of repose, the youth full of feverish impatience and torn by anxiety.

CHAPTER V.

A CHAPTER WHICH IS SHORT, BUT LONG ENOUGH, HOWEVER, TO ADMIT OF A FINE DISPLAY OF TRUE COURAGE BY M. LOUIS MAROT.

When Doctor Lavoison descended from his lofty room he was struggling with a sudden growth of new thoughts, and painful emotions. He had tormented Desselais, whom at heart he despised, in a spirit of wanton levity, and had provoked him into sending Marot a challenge for a meeting on the Bois de Boulogne, which then, as now, had an evil reputation fastened on it by blood spilt in unnumbered duels. To such encounters, as a rule, Lavoison saw no objection. Like the vast majority of Frenchmen of that day, it never crossed his mind that such an invitation as he carried in his breast-pocket could be refused, nor had it occurred to him that there could be a better arbitration for private quarrels than that he was commissioned to arrange with the young soldier; but, in

this case, he felt ill at ease, and wished Desselais at the devil very heartily before he reached the street. Once there, he confessed to himself that his chance for an immediate delivery of his message was but slender, and settling his hat down upon his brows, he took his way mechanically, but by devious ways, towards the Fencing Master's. The inspiration of the Devil could not have served him better. He found his man. The cloud disappeared from Lavoison's brow. He was mid-leg in the Rubicon and knew how to cross to the other bank. At this moment also the impatient soldier saw Dr. Lavoison. The familiar face, for he was not a man to pass unnoticed, brought back to Marot's mind the scene of the morning, and the fact that the gentleman now approaching him had been spoken of as a Surgeon. They moved towards each other eagerly, but with what different motives and emotions! Doctor Lavoison took off his hat with a grave and ceremonious air. The soldier moved forward abruptly and without a salutation.

Lavoison was the first to speak, because he had carefully prepared his speech. "Monsieur," said he,

"you may perhaps do me the honor to remember that we have met before?"

Marot, surprised at the ceremonious gravity of the question, bowed his head.

Lavoison continued: "Monsieur may also remember—I have not the happiness of Monsieur's name?"

"My name," said the soldier, "is Marot, Louis Marot."

"Then Monsieur Marot may, perhaps, remember his adventure with Monsieur Desselais? That gentleman feels himself so affronted that he has charged me to deliver this," saying which Lavoison drew out the note of which he was the bearer.

"I think I understand," said Marot, and glancing over the paper, he looked steadily at Lavoison, as he answered: "Tell your friend that in this quarrel I will not fight."

The Doctor was bewildered; his face turned red and pale by turns. Here was a new experience. At last he said with a sneer: "A soldier!—a soldier of France! And you will not fight?"

"Monsieur," cried Marot with dignity, "you do me

a wrong. I will fight under the Eagle! I will fight as a soldier of France against her enemies. I have fought under the Imperial eye when it was no holiday review; but in this quarrel I will not fight. It is against the military law, and it is against my conscience."

"Monsieur," said Lavoison, "I am not certain that I understand your reasoning; but, I confess you have given me a better opinion of your trade. I thought soldiers cut throats for pastime."

"And now," said Marot, "let me ask you a question. You are a Surgeon, I think?"

"An humble member of the Faculty," said Lavoison, with a bow.

"Then," cried Marot, "there is no time to lose. The Fencing Master is ill, and needs your aid."

Speaking thus, Marot hurried the Surgeon towards the Fencing Master's door, saw him enter, and returned to his promenade.

CHAPTER VI.

"MADAME, JE VOUS AVOUE QUE JE SUIS SURPRIS, ET QUE JE NE VOUS ATTENDAIS PAS ICI."

The departure of Lavoison was a relief to Desselais. As the echoes on the stairway died out he felt his breath come with greater freedom. He was relieved from the irony of his friend, and had full leisure to compose his mind. But to think was a task to which he was not accustomed. The effort fatigued him; he yawned, filled himself a glass of wine, and surveyed the apartment.

"Bah!" he cried in disdain, "what a smell of drugs!" and he tapped on a retort, after which he wiped the dust from the tips of his fingers. Next he took up a book, but Desselais was not given to literature. It was Moliere, but it never occurred to him to read *Les Precieuses Redicules:* had he attempted the task the piece he would have chosen was *Don*

Juan. Then he stood in the middle of the apartment and surveyed himself as well as he was able.

"Faith!" cried he, with a sardonic smile, "Faith! it is odd that I who have expended eight thousand francs within the year upon my dress—I, admired of women and envied of men, should be reduced to this costume!"

Desselais, in his proper apparel, was considered handsome. Rousseau would have taken him as one of his true typical Frenchmen. He was short, but well shaped; active and sinewy, vain, brave and arrogant. Having relieved his mind by this outburst, he cast a quick glance around the room.

"A glass," said he, "surely Lavoison has a mirror! Great Heavens, what a little monster it is!" he cried, as he took down the object of his search. He walked to the window to secure a good light, and made a study of his face. "*Mon Dieu!* how it distorts one's features! It is incredible that a rational creature should possess such an abomination!"

A new idea now presented itself to Desselais. He drew a chair towards the window and adjusted the

mirror upon the floor, supporting it against the rickety *fauteuil.* Absorbed in this occupation he forgot even the cause of wearing so grotesque a garb. He strained his neck—he looked first over his right shoulder and then over his left. He gathered up his breeches at the knee; he made a grimace at the size of his stockings.

"*Peste!*" he cried, "this is droll!" and he changed the angle of the glass to get a better view of his figure. But at last he grew weary of this absurd study of his own proportions. He replaced the glass, smoothed his moustache, arched his eyebrows, and began a new survey of the apartment. An odd object caught his wandering eye against the opposite wall. To seize and drag it forth was the work of a moment. "What the devil have we here!" cried Desselais, greatly excited at his discovery. This piece of furniture, if so it may be called, consisted of a disc mounted like an easel. At first he thought that it might be some astrological instrument, and surveyed it with great care. He tapped upon it with his finger and as the metal answered, he said: "Ah, here we have iron!

and what are these?" Desselais made a close examination of the marks to which his question referred before he answered, and then he skipped back from his study with the animated cry: "Just Heaven! these are bullet marks! This is a target. Here have we the pistol practice! Here also have we a mystery!"

The marks, of which he spoke and at which he gazed so intently, were so laid, one upon another, over a common centre, that supposing them to be left by bullets fired from one side of the ample room to the other, they showed great skill in the marksman, who, as Desselais readily conjectured, was no other person than Lavoison himself.

At this moment a knock came at the door. His first impulse was to take refuge in the closet. The knock came again, and was delivered with impatience.

"Holo!" cried Desselais, "who is there?"

"It is I—Madelon," was the agitated answer. His face turned crimson with pleasure, but he felt no surprise. "Just Heaven," he said to himself. "I take back my imprications on my ill-fortune. Madelon has sought me out to atone for this morning's misadven-

ture." This thought passed through his mind like light.

"Hold!" he cried, "one moment." This moment he occupied in a vain endeavor to improve his dress. His eye lighted on Lavoison's gown, and hastily drawing this on, he threw open the door; and Madelon rushed into the apartment. She was bewildered as she gazed about, and Desselais, with bitter chagrin, had to admit that he, at least, was not the object of her search. Had a doubt lingered on his mind, her words would have dispelled it.

"You here!" she cried.

"Yes, you see, and"—here he bowed with easy insolence—"I flatter myself that you have found whom you sought."

Madelon drew back with a look of scorn and wonder in her brilliant eyes. "I came," she cried, "seeking Monsieur Lavoison. My father is ill and needs his aid. Oh! tell me, tell me, I pray you, where he can be found; minutes are precious!"

Desselais was deeply mortified. His vanity had hurried him into an absurd mistake, and he trembled

with anger. All that was bad in his nature concentrated itself at that moment. He looked at Madelon, flushed and tearful as she stood, without pity, and he answered her with a diabolical insolence.

"*Parbleu!* your acting is superb. But there are no spectators. It is enough that you have found me. As you say, moments are precious; let us not waste them." Here he turned the key, and leaning against the door folded his arms and looked at Madelon.

"Monsieur Desselais," she said, "do not make a jest of my sorrow. Think! my father is an old man; he is poor and ill, and I must find assistance for him."

He to whom she addressed herself was deaf to her entreaty, blind to her tears! "Tush! Madelon," he answered, "here have we no spectators; here let us, then, have no acting, though Clarion herself might take a lesson from you. Come, let us have done with this," and he stepped towards her, holding out his hand.

The girl's whole expression of face and figure underwent a sudden change. Her voice, low and soft, had been supplicating and prayerful; now as she spoke it

was hard, metallic and full of scorn. She was taller than her tormentor. Her figure, though graceful, was robust, and her eyes gazed with a steady glow of courage.

"Monsieur," she said, "I did not know that a Frenchman could be so base a coward."

Desselais felt the bitterness of these words; but they only stimulated his malignant temper.

"Madelon," said he slowly, "that attitude is superb! But, let us talk. Now, confess that this is an invention. Admit that you came, not to seek Lavoison, but your devoted slave. Now, my angel, don't fly in a passion."

"Oh, insolent!" she cried, clenching her hands, "Oh, insolent! Can it be possible that God suffers such monsters upon the earth!" and the young girl cast an appealing glance towards the Heavens.

Suddenly Desselais took another tone. He spoke rapidly, and with a coarse eloquence, because he was base enough to believe in the power of his own corrupt imaginations. "Listen to me, girl!" he cried. "If you will return my love, there is no pleasure known

to Paris which shall not be yours." He grew madder as he spoke. "See here! behold these yellow conjurers," and he poured a handful of gold upon the table, "these can change themselves into laces, and silks, and velvets, and gems—into a gilded chariot and prancing steeds—wine of the richest tints and rarest vintage"—

Madelon arrested his speech, and stabbed him to the quick with the wit of a woman. She broke into a peal of laughter. Desselais faltered, turned red, then pale, and stopped in the midst and climax of his infamous address.

"Monsieur," cried Madelon, "Monsieur Desselais, let me advise you: when you next make love pay a little more attention to your costume. It looks as if borrowed from the *Mont de Piete!*"

None but a Frenchwoman could have delivered this blow. Desselais cowed like a cur under the lash, then he fell into a chair and gathered Lavoison's robe close about his legs. The creature whom neither prayers nor entreaties could move was overwhelmed at the ridicule of his intended victim. At this moment quick

steps were heard upon the stairs, a hand was laid upon the lock, the door shaken, and then the voice of Lavoison penetrated the room:

"Desselais," he cried, "open! I am in haste!" The friendly voice overcame Madelon, and bursting into a passion of tears, she sank upon the floor.

"Again the door shook, and then yielding to the pressure, it flew open and revealed Lavoison and Marot. The quick-witted *Parisien* took in the situation at a glance. He saw everything, even to the Napoleons that glittered on the table.

"Monsieur," said he to Desselais, "I think we have an account to settle," and he took a step forward.

Desselais rose up, shrugged his shoulders, spread out his hands, elevated his eyebrows and exclaimed: "Let me beg you not to make a scene. Consider the reputation of my charming friend there. She is compromised, it is true, but"—

He proceeded no further. Louis Marot seized him with a grasp from which there was no escape, and despite his struggles, dragged him from the room. "*Scelerat!*" hissed the soldier, and then Desselais

went headlong down the stairs, under an impulse he was powerless to resist.

"Bravo!" cried Lavoison, as he held a glass of wine to the lips of Madelon. "Bravo! There goes my friend playing his favorite part of battering-ram. Faith! he has scraped acquaintance with every separate step from the top to the bottom of the stairway!"

As the sound ceased, Marot returned flushed and angry, with an expression on his face which bore witness that his refusal to go to the Bois de Boulogne proceeded from no lack of spirit.

"Come," said Lavoison, "let us leave Madelon to herself. This weeping will do her good, it is equal to blood-letting."

A few moments before she had stood strong and brave and beautiful as Camilla; but now, overpowered by the reaction of her emotions, she was a weak girl dissolved in tears.

The two men withdrew to the window. Involuntarily they spoke in the low tones which we use in sick chambers.

"Monsieur," said Lavoison, "you have enriched my

experiences to-day. You have shown me a soldier with a conscience above sword-play. May I be permitted to ask one question?"

"As many as you choose, only I reserve the right to parry your thrusts if I see fit. Begin." As he spoke he glanced over his shoulder.

"Oh, she is in no danger," said Lavoison, "the brave girl will be herself in less time than it takes you to answer my question, which is this: How can you, a soldier, quick, resolute, brave—how can you refuse to meet a man when he calls you out? Faith, it puzzles me!"

Marot smiled at the question as he answered. "Have you not said I have a conscience?"

"That is droll," cried Lavoison, "that is what I do not comprehend. And how do you brave opinion?"*

"It is not so difficult," replied Marot, "the opinion which I consult is among my comrades. They have seen me on the field. They know how I have won

*It may be said that Marot was impossible under the Empire, but he is only presented as an exception, not a type. Moreover Count Segur, in his Memoirs, tells a story of his adventure with Colonel de Labaree, which shows that a challenge may be declined with grace and magnanimity.

promotion. I leave them to judge. Then, too, there is the Imperial decree."

At this moment Madelon rose up. Her face was flushed, but she had regained her composure. "Come," said she, "take me to my father! Come, Monsieur Lavoison, he needs your aid. It was that which brought me hither." And the red in her cheeks deepened to a burning blush.

"Make yourself at ease," said Lavoison. "I have seen him, and now that you are yourself, we will return to my old friend. I leave you to follow with Monsieur Marot."

"Not so," said the young soldier, "I will wait without until it pleases Madelon to move."

"Yes," said Lavoison, with a laugh, "yes, the contrast with Desselais' conduct is admirable!"

"And it will not be forgotten," cried the young girl, in a voice of such exceeding sweetness that Marot was to be pardoned if in his own mind he called her an angel. Together the trio left Lavoison's lodgings, to hurry to the bedside of the Fencing Master.

CHAPTER VII.

WHAT SOME OF HIS FRIENDS SAID OF HIM.

On the morning following the eventful day I have described, a group of pupils were gathered before the *salle d'armes*. On the door a placard told of the illness of the Fencing Master, and invoked indulgence of his friends. It was at this they gazed. They spoke together, and their talk ran thus:

1*st Pupil.* "And so the old man is sick?"

2*d Pupil.* "He has been failing for some time. We shall have to look for another master. Ha! here comes Lavoison!"

Lavoison. "Ah, gentlemen, no lessons to-day! The old soldier has had a sharp attack."

3*d Pupil.* "It is distressing; and at this hour one finds it dificult to dispose of his leisure."

4*th Pupil.* "Will he recover?"

Lavoison. "Permanently, no; but he will rally

from this attack. And now, question for question, what news have you?"

In chorus, { "Have you not heard?" / "Great news, indeed!" / "Surely he has heard!" / "Desselais"—

Lavoison, (stopping his ears). "One at a time! In mercy, one at a time!"

1*st Pupil.* "You remember Desselais' adventure here?"

Lavoison. "Who could ever forget it! Faith! he has furnished me laughter for a month!"

2*d Pupil.* "Well it has a sequel!"

1*st Pupil.* "And both parts of the story have gone abroad."

3*d Pupil.* "Gone to the four winds!"

4*th Pupil.* "The whole town is convulsed with laughter!"

Lavoison, (sententiously). "An honest laugh for once!"

1*st Pupil.* "He has fled before it in dismay!"

Lavoison. "The Devil!"

1*st Pupil.* "No, Desselais."

Lavoison. "Well, it's much the same. So he has gone?"

2*d Pupil.* "Undoubtedly."

Lavoison. "Faith! I'm not sorry. I shall survive it."

3*d Pupil.* "Sorry! Rather should you be glad, for he swore a great oath to be the death of you."

Lavoison. "Well, I shall wait for him with patience, and the longer the better, for I have a great horror of practicing surgery on—myself. But you spoke of a sequel. What of that?"

In chorus,

"O! it is wonderful!"

"Paris has not had such a laugh this year."

"His adventure proves there is a Providence!"

"It is sure to go in the next comedy."

Lavoison. "Again, gentlemen, I beg you to speak one at a time."

1*st Pupil.* "Well, Desselais went to your room, did he not?"

Lavoison. "I had the pleasure of his company."

1*st Pupil.* "It seems that in going to your lodgings the porter was struck by his appearance as he passed the lodge, and drew his own conclusions, so that when Desselais came tumbling down the stairs, clad in the drollest costume, I am told, the *concierge* concluded he was mad, that he had murdered and robbed you—Ha! Ha! Ha!—and so laid hold of him. Faith! and made him captive too—handed him over to the Gendarmes, and was about having him sent to a *Maison de Sante,* or the guillotine."

Lavoison. "Just heaven! Here is retribution!" and the Doctor laughed and danced in an ecstasy of delight. When he could again speak he surprised his gay companions by the sudden gravity of his tone.

"Messieurs," he said, "this Desselais is a scoundrel. When you have occasion to speak of him, pray quote that as my opinion. And now I must get to my patient."

CHAPTER VIII.

MONSIEUR LAVOISON MAKES SOME ENQUIRIES INTO THE FAMILY HISTORY OF THE FENCING MASTER.

The room into which Monsieur Lavoison entered was like his own in one respect: it was immediately under the tiles; but here all resemblance ceased. It was the picture of neatness and good order; evidently a woman's care presided over it. There were flowers in the window, a wreath of purple and yellow immortelles hung beneath the sword which Deslond had won in his campaigns. There was not a speck of dust upon floor or furniture, and the narrow window panes shone like crystal. An adjoining closet was occupied by Madelon, and it was plain, at a glance, that the Fencing Master's *menage* was ruled according to the requirements of an honorable poverty. In the presence of the old soldier and his daughter, Monsieur Lavoison became a different man from the person we have seen. His dignified deportment would have

been approved by the medical dignitaries of the *Rue St. Jean de Beauvais.* He carried an air of authority, the result, perhaps, of art; but the benevolence of his countenance, the discretion of his words, sprang spontaneously from a good heart. He advanced to Deslond with a cheerful smile, nodded to Madelon, and sat down by the old soldier, who lay extended on a camp bedstead, which its owner would not have exchanged for one of ebony.

"Ah!" cried Lavoison, "I see, my brave friend, that you are on the high road to a speedy recovery. You will soon be able to take the air."

"It is true," said Deslond, "I grow better; but at first I thought I had my marching orders. Remember, Madelon, when I do march my old sword yonder goes with me."

The young girl laid her hand upon her father's lips, leant over him to kiss his withered cheek, and then stole to the window were she wiped the tears from her eyes and said a little prayer of thankfulness to the good God who seemed to promise restoration of health to the old soldier.

"Tush!" said Lavoison, "this is folly. Talk not of marching to another world, and remember, my brave friend, that the Physician is Commander-in-Chief in a sick man's room."

"I obey orders," said the old man, smiling, and making a military salute.

"This is well," said the young man, "and now, Madelon, prepare this draught. Sleep is all that is needed—sleep and generous wine."

The Fencing Master drained the glass which his daughter gave him, and composed himself on his pillow. Madelon withdrew to the window, and Monsieur Lavoison resumed his seat. When the regular breathing of the old man told that the drug had taken effect, he rose softly and joined Madelon. The young girl prepared to listen, for she understood plainly from his face that Monsieur had something to say which concerned his patient, and she waited for his speech with anxious eyes and pallid cheeks.

"Madelon," said he, "the physician stands in the relation of close confidence to his clients, therefore there are many things which he should know."

She grew still paler as he spoke, and a shade of bewilderment mingled with her anxiety. Her voice, too, failed her, and she only bowed her glossy head in assent to the formal beginning of the physician.

"There are questions which I must ask," continued he, "and you will understand that they are not prompted by vulgar curiosity."

Madelon grew still more embarrassed, for she had never seen her companion so grave in manner, never heard him so dignified in speech. The nobility of his calling enveloped Lavoison like a robe of honor—the toga of a Senator.

"First of all, then, your father must have rest of mind and body—change of air and more generous nourishment."

The heavy tear-drops came into her bright eyes as she heard these words, for Madelon knew the remedies were beyond their reach.

"These things," continued Lavoison, "are necessary and, I think I see my way, dimly it is true, but still I think I see my way to securing what he needs."

The blood rushed in tumult to the young girl's face,

and as she clasped her hands, a smile parted her lips, but she did not speak. It seemed that her soul was standing a-tip toe looking out through her tearful eyes.

"But to succeed," said Lavoison, "I need information—that you must give." Madelon nodded. "Tell me, then, has not your father relatives beyond the barriers?"

"Yes," replied the young girl, "at Bellevue—yes."

"And the name?" asked Lavoison.

"Baudin. Madame Baudin."

"Baudin?" asked he, tapping his forehead. "Baudin? Is there not a banker by that name?"

"The same, my cousin's husband."

"And Madame Baudin?"—

"Is my father's niece, daughter of my uncle Victor, who was killed in Italy. Her mother was of Milan."

"This is better than I expected!" cried Lavoison, but still speaking in a subdued tone, "better than I expected! And now another question—Faith, I think I would have made a good advocate! Is your cousin the first or second wife of Monsieur Baudin?"

"His first. Why do you ask?"

"Because I remember to have heard that the rich banker married an actress. Is this the fact?"

"Yes," answered Madelon, "it is true. My cousin was an actress. She inherited great talents from her mother, and I think left the stage with reluctance."

"And she is rich?"

"Yes, she has no wish ungratified."

"Old Baudin dotes on her?"

"He is devoted to his wife."

"That is odd!"

"Odd! Why odd, Monsieur?" asked Madelon, smilingly.

"Umph! Because, my little friend, I have generally found that gentlemen admire the wives of other men more than their own! But I am not through with my questions. I think you have visited your cousin?"

"Yes, we were warm friends. Julie is a noble woman!"

"When were you at Madame Baudin's?"

"In mid-summer, a year ago."

"Ah! You enjoyed it?"

"Yes, the flowers, the trees, the birds, the broad green fields opened a new world to me. I think I was never more happy."

"I understand," said Lavoison, "pastoral and romantic! But why do you say you were once friends?"

Madelon's eyes filled with tears, but after a moment's pause she answered in a tender whisper, which told that even young as she was she had a past to lament because it was to her eyes irrevocable. "It pains me to think of this. But you have some good reason for your question?"

"Reason! Assuredly I have. A wise physician, little one, uses many remedies, and everybody knows that I am wise and an ornament to the Faculty. But go on, tell me your story.

After a momentary pause Madelon began: "My cousin is generous—oh! kind and generous to a fault! But my father has quarrelled with her, and"— here her tears ran over, and Lavoison made a study of a group of pigeons on the opposite housetop.

"Well, little one, continue," he said, after a long

pause, "your father quarreled with her? For what cause?"

"It was in mid-summer that I went to them, and we read together many of the plays in which she had acted. And though her voice, they say, is sadly altered, it is wonderful to hear her. And it is on this point that Monsieur Baudin is sensitive. When she reads aloud, which she sometimes does, he grows melancholy, and begins to fancy that she is weary of her quiet life. He is jealous of her old profession, though he says he only fears the disease which once attacked her throat may return again. In me she found what Monsieur Baudin is unable to give, sympathy and admiration of her art. We read together, and it pleased her to think that I could achieve on the stage the destiny she left unaccomplished. This scheme grew in her favor, until at last she laid her plans before my father. This enraged him. He said Julie intended to steal me away. The explosion was terrible. Since then we have not met,"

"Faith! this shall help us," cried Lavoison, starting up, and Madelon, seeing that his questions had come

to an end, stole away to her closet, where her tears, springing from many emotions, could flow in silence and without restraint. This did not pass unnoticed by the keen eyes of the young man. His was that exquisite tact which only sees and hears that which should be observed, or listened to, and hence for the distress of Madelon he had been blind. He stood a few moments over the sick man, saw that his breath was calm, his aspect quiet, and then, without noise, he withdrew from the apartment.

CHAPTER IX.

THE FENCING MASTER'S VISITORS.

It was the morning after this visit: Madelon sat at the windows in the same spot she had occupied when telling her brief and simple story. There was a faint perfume diffused about the room, shed abroad by the flowers beside her. The early sun gilded the house tops, flights of pigeons wheeled in the bland Spring air, the azure sky was without a cloud, the roar of the busy streets came to her ears like the voice of a distant waterfall, and her heart was light in sympathy with the smiling face of Nature. She looked dreamily through the window, and the strong light which fell upon her face seemed to irradiate it with an ever changing glory. The bloom upon her cheek was warm and rich, the shadow of care had passed away from her innocent forehead, her eyes disclosed new depths, and as she put stitches in the lace on which she worked, her voice gave expression to her happiness in a low

melody, to which the Fencing Master listened as he lay in bed. Her tones were full of music, deep, soft, caressing in their expression, and imbued with that rare and charming quality which one expresses in the word sympathetic. In short, her voice possessed the power to interpret with fidelity her emotions. And this morning these were such as befit youth. She was reassured as to her father, a romance had budded and blossomed in her life, and she sang softly to herself as she looked up into the sun-lit heavens.

Her pleasant dreams were soon to be interrupted, and her thoughts called back to the duties of the present. Monsieur Lavoison's foot was on the stairway. This gay young man had found that it was a luxury to do kindnesses for the old soldier, that it was ennobling to approach a pure young girl, a wholesome lesson to study simple lives and honorable poverty. He was acquiring a new experience, and a wider field than he had ever surveyed before was opening before him. He began to realize that life had duties to be met as well as relaxations to be enjoyed—that as complements to each other these might give happiness as

the result. In this mood he ascended the stairway and found the landing before the Fencing Master's room occupied by one who had preceded him. He was confronted by the old man, in brown, whom we have already seen in company with Louis Marot. The two men saluted each other, and though they had never met before face to face as they did now, they were not unknown by sight and profession to each other. Monsieur Lavoison waited in a respectful attitude for the old man to speak, which he did at once in a tone bland and kindly, but with the air and manner of one whose words carry the weight of authority.

"You can tell me where I can find Pierre Deslond, can you not, Monsieur?"

"It is upon him that I attend," was the reply, "and it will be my pleasure to show you his apartment; but before this, let me invoke your aid? May I enlist you in a kindness to my brave friend?"

"It is because I would serve him," said the old man, "that I am here."

"Behold! then," cried Lavoison, drawing forth a heavy purse, "Behold! our brave old friend needs

wine and more generous food, and aid will come with a better grace from you than from me. This sum is specially dedicated to this charity."

"I understand," said the man in brown, "the difference in our age—"

"Nay, Monsieur," cried Lavoison, "your superior dignity makes it of greater satisfaction."

The young man's companion smiled upon him, held out his snuff-box, took a pinch, and secured the purse in his bosom, while the Surgeon continued: "This gold comes from the most exemplary youth in all Paris. A youth devoted to good works, whose modesty is so great—an unusual thing in this generation—that having left this handsome sum upon my table to be used in charities, he fled from my apartment with such precipitation that he fell headlong down the stairs. Pardon me if I laugh, but the picture of this virtuous young man amuses me."

And without answering the enquiring glance of his companion, Lavoison knocked at the door of the Fencing Master. The sound roused Madelon from her reverie. She ceased to sing, and sprang up to

admit the Physician. At the sight of his companion she drew back, but as the old man took off his hat, with grave politeness, his noble aspect reassured her.

"Here," said Lavoison, "is one who would be a friend to your father," and with this simple introduction the two men stepped within the apartment.

Pierre held out his hand, the Surgeon advanced towards him, and the old visitor remained modestly withdrawn.

"Ah!" cried Deslond, "my brave young friend, I am better, thanks to your care and Madelon's! I feel myself able to sit at the window, and have an appetite."

During this speech Lavoison held his fingers on the old soldier's pulse. The face of the Physician confirmed the words of the patient.

"Yes," said he, "you are stronger and better, as you say."

Here he made a sign to his companion to come forward. The old man obeyed it with alacrity.

"Ah! Captain Deslond," he cried, "you are conquering disease bravely. All that is necessary, I speak after some experience, is for you to obey the

orders of our wise young friend. Obedience to orders, my brave Captain, is the first principle of action with old soldiers like ourselves!"

All invalids become egotists, their ills of necessity concentrate their thoughts upon themselves, and hence Deslond had seen without observing his visitor. To this address, he answered: "Ah! comrade, you, too, have been a soldier?"

"And still am," answered the old man." "I hope to die under my flag."

"The banner of France!" cried the Fencing Master. "Give me your hand."

And Deslond stretched out his own in a glow of enthusiasm.

"Hush!" said his visitor, meeting his grasp. "Hush! You excite yourself! I am here in obedience to the command of my superior officer."

"Right, comrade!" ejaculated Pierre, "right! Always obey orders!"

"Then," said the old man, "it is the command of that superior officer that you receive this," and he placed the purse he had received from Lavoison on the

table. This is to help you to change of air and rest, and a holiday.

A frown darkened the forehead of Deslond, and his cheeks flushed. "Your intention is kind," he said, "but you wound me. I cannot accept charity."

"Nay, my brave friend," cried the old man, "my orders are from a high source—a very high source—and you must make no objection."

The steady gaze and tone of grave command which accompanied these words subdued the sick man, who, speaking as much to himself as to his companion, said:

"Yes, sent by some old comrade who has risen. Was it sent by a Colonel?"

"No. Higher than a Colonel," said the old man smiling.

"A General of Brigade?"

"No. Higher than a General of Brigade."

"Ah! I see," cried Deslond, "a General of Division?"

"No," replied his visitor, still smiling, "higher than a General of Division."

"A Marshal of France?"

"No. Higher than a Marshal of France."

A sudden light blazed in the eyes of the Fencing Master, and he cried out in ecstacy: "The Emperor! Madelon, do you hear! The Emperor!"

"Hush," said the old man." "This excitement will be too much for you. Adieu. I shall come again."

"Hold!" exclaimed Deslond, "Your name, comrade? Your name?"

"Call me the Imperial Messenger, if you will. Once more, adieu." And without another word he hurried from the apartment.

"Ah! the Emperor remembers me. Madelon, this is a happy day! And the Messenger! *Parbleu!* I had a thousand questions to ask. He is gone."

"And now," said Lavoison, "this is enough. It is a glorious thing to be so remembered. But there are other things to think of.

"For example, my brave Captain, your rations! Madelon, our sick man must have a chicken and a bottle of sound wine. Fly! and let us begin to make a new man of him."

The young girl hurried to obey this order, and in

the meantime Lavoison aided the old soldier in his toilet and helped him to a seat at the window. In a short space the door again opened and Madelon, all palpitating with delight, clapped her hands with the glee of a child at the sight of her father thus far restored to strength. Placing her basket on the table, she embraced the old man tenderly, kissed him on both cheeks, smoothed down his hair, and humming a gay melody, began to arrange the breakfast which she had brought from a *restaurateur's* hard by. An agreeable odor diffused itself throughout the room. Pierre's chicken was done to a turn, and when Lavoison drew the cork from the bottle of Pomard, the Fencing Master called out "Bravo!" in a cheerful tone, and the three smiled in a common satisfaction.

"Ha!" cried Lavoison, "my brave friend, this honest Burgundy will put new life into your heart!" and the Surgeon held out a glass to Deslond, which he drank slowly, with many nods and meditative winks like one who knows good liquor.

When the old man had finished his meal Lavoison rose up to depart, but before making his retreat he

handed Deslond a well bound octavo volume, which the Fencing Master took with evident surprise and curiosity.

"Ha!" cried the old man, "what is this: Lives of Christian Soldiers."

"I found it on the table," said Lavoison, answering the look. "It was left for you, I fancy, by your friend, the Imperial Messenger."

"Humph!" ejaculated the old man, "I have seen many soldiers in the armies of France, but not much piety;" but he opened the book, and Lavoison left him interested in its pages.

"Now," said the Surgeon to himself, as he descended the stairs, "now for a messenger! Ha! Monsieur Marot is the man for this mission. It was lucky that I got his address from him." Thinking which Lavoison hastened in search of the young soldier.

CHAPTER X.

LAVOISON SENDS A LETTER TO BELLEVUE.

Two hours afterward this Louis Marot, mounted on a fine barb, was galloping along the road which leads to Bellevue. He was too much absorbed in his own thoughts to dwell upon the scene before him, but a man even in greater haste than his might have been pardoned had he pulled up on the hill between Meudon and Sevres, for from that point two leagues distant you see the windings of the Seine, and the great city in the distance.

On that day the picture was enchanting The thousand tints of tender green which the early Spring spreads upon the earth were visible on every hand. A silver gauze of vapor hung over the river, and the mists above the distant towers and roofs of Paris took a pallid, yet rich gold color under the brilliant sun. But Marot galloped along rather like a soldier bound for an outpost than a traveller bent on pleasure. Ev-

identently he had not studied Emile, and was occupied with thoughts which excluded the aspect of the scene before him. He rode at a swinging gallop, his knees holding close to the saddle, his elbows in, his whole figure strong, but flexible. In this attitude the young soldier appeared to great advantage. He had a new dignity in his air, and rode like a man who felt himself entitled to be mounted. At last he reined in his horse at the lodge gate of an imposing chateau, and here he paused to make an examination of the spot. It was clear that this was not the study of an artist: he surveyed the details of the picture not because of their beauty, but to identify the place. The chateau stood on a green eminence, with terraces sloping down towards the road, and clumps of noble trees grouped about it, with a thick stretch of picturesque woodland in the back ground. After a rapid survey of the scene, Marot nodded an affirmative to himself, as much as to say "I have found the place," touched his horse with the spur, and galloped through the gateway, saying, with a smile: "Ah! yes, it was here that I first saw Madelon."

As he approached the chateau he moderated his pace, at the headlong speed of which the snuffy old lodge-keeper had been greatly scandalized, and when he threw himself from his horse he had lost something of his air of decision.

"For Madame Baudin," he said, as he handed his card to the *laquais* in waiting. On this he had written a line which hinted at rather than explained his mission. Following this man Marot found himself in a grand salon, rich in gilding and busts, and books and pictures. It commanded a view of the charming picture which he had disdained in his ride, and in all its appointments told of wealth combined with cultivated taste and refinement.

"Umph!" said Marot, "commerce has its victories, I see, as well as war, and Monsieur Baudin seems to have had his share of them."

At this moment a tall and stately lady swept into the room, advanced rapidly towards him, still holding his card in her hand. "Monsieur Marot," she cried, "you are welcome! Here, pray be seated! And now tell me of my uncle and Madelon."

These words were poured out with all the volubility of a French woman, and the expression of her face showed that she felt in reality the anxiety she expressed. Madame Baudin was exceedingly handsome. Her hair and eyes were intensely black, her complexion dark, her color warm, her figure superb. She combined in her air and manner the Italian and French, which is but another way of saying that she was full of vivacity and grace.

"Come!" she said, tapping her foot on the tufted carpet. "Come! I am all impatience!"

Obedient to this command Marot drew forth a note from his bosom. "Madame," said he, "this, from Monsieur Lavoison, a Doctor of Medicine, who attends your uncle, will explain the case to you better than any words of mine."

Madame Baudin devoured the note with eager eyes. Ah! mon Dieu!" cried she, "it is terrible to think of the folly of my good uncle. Monsieur Marot, you know, perhaps, that we have quarreled?"

The soldier shook his head.

"No? Well, it is true. We have quarreled.

Just Heavens! What is it I say? I confuse myself in my distress. The history is that my uncle has quarreled with me. Never for a moment has he lost his place in my heart." And Madame Baudin pressed her well-shaped hands upon her bosom. "Never," she continued, "have I forgotten Madelon."

As the young soldier looked at the animated face of his handsome hostess, he said to himself that the banker had been fortunate in other fields beside those of commerce.

"Ah!" she cried, starting up, "this estrangement must have an end! Monsieur Marot, say to your friend—how do you call him?—yes, say to Monsieur Lavoison that it shall be my care to see that his patient finds the ease which is needful to him in his old age. Here shall he find an asylum."

Half an hour afterwards Louis Marot was galloping back towards Paris so well pleased with his own thoughts that he paid no heed to the winding river, or the great city momentarily rising closer on his view.

CHAPTER XI.

THE FENCING MASTER PREPARES TO CHANGE HIS QUARTERS.

The scene still lingers in the chamber of the Fencing Master. It is the morning after the day on which Louis Marot made his visit to Madame Baudin. The only change in the picture is that the old man sits at the window, while Madelon is busy about the room. Deslond is reading the book which Monsieur the Messenger, as he calls him, is supposed to have left. At this moment there was a knock at the door. The Fencing Master laid down his book.

"It is Monsieur Lavoison," said the young girl.

Lavoison saluted Madelon, advanced straight to Pierre, took his hand, and, speaking abruptly, said: "Quick surgery is the best! my brave friend. Your niece, Madame Baudin, and her husband will presently be here to inquire after your condition."

Madelon came forward, her hands clasped, her eyes

tearful and full of entreaty, but her voice refused to obey her will. Perhaps her attitude was more eloquent than words. The heart of the old soldier softened. Lavoison cried out:

"Ah! little one, we have the victory!"

"Yes," said Pierre, "I am beaten, and surrender."

"You shall march out with the honors of war," said the Doctor, "colors flying, drums beating, and with all your baggage! Yes, my brave Captain, with all the honors."

"With all my baggage?" said the Fencing Master.

"Yes," cried Lavoison, "with all your baggage! for faith, old friend, you are to go this very day to the chateau of Madame Baudin."

"Impossible," ejaculated Pierre, "impossible."

"But it is true, nevertheless," said Lavoison. You are to go into the country. Remember, such is my order. They come to invite you."

At this moment there came a loud, nervous knock at the door.

"Now," said the Surgeon, pressing his hand firmly on the shoulder of his patient, "now, receive your

niece as if nothing had happened. Remember the terms of your capitulation. She is here!

At this announcement Madame Baudin entered the room. She folded Madelon in her arms, and the two women wept tears of happiness at the meeting, for they were dear to each other. Then, disengaging herself from Madelon, Madame Baudin embraced the old soldier, who was moved to tears by the affection of his niece.

"My dear uncle," she whispered, smoothing back his gray hair with a gesture of infinite tenderness, "this is to be no longer. Henceforward you belong to me—to Madelon and Julie, just so long as it pleases the good God that we shall live."

Disengaging herself from the old soldier, who found it necessary to cough, and even to snuffle, his niece turned toward Monsieur Baudin, who now came forward. This gentleman was grave and serious in his aspect, stout and rosy, well dressed, and much addicted to snuff. He was one of those men who grew rich for no other reason, apparently, than that they have been born to good luck, and rich he undoubtedly

was. His wealth was generously used. To complete his portrait, he loved his wife, found a great pleasure in echoing her words, anticipating her wishes, and gratifying all her caprices. But with one exception: The least manifestation of a love of her old pursuits depressed him. Had he been a man of more force of character, and strength of will, he would have flown into a passion on such occasions; but, as it was, when Madame Baudin read aloud some favorite play, which, to do her justice, she rarely did, he only fell into a state of mild despair.

He now came forward with grave politeness, shook the hand of Pierre, and assured him that he was charmed to find him improved in health. He then drew out his snuff-box, offered it to Deslond, and took a pinch with the air of a man who has a good conscience. He saw that Madame Baudin approved his deportment, and was happy.

That brilliant woman appeared to great advantage. Her dress was faultless—no woman in France had a better milliner; but her superb complexion was beyond all art. She had seen Lavoison on entering the room:

she now observed him. He had modestly withdrawn himself from the family group, and affected great interest in one or two phials which stood on a window-sill in the rear of the apartment. Madelon followed the direction of her cousin's eyes, and smiled as she called; "Monsieur Lavoison!"

The Surgeon came forward. Monsieur Diaforius never looked graver. His affectation was immediately put to flight. Madame Baudin effected this in few words.

"Ah!" she cried, with a deepened color and sparkling eyes, shaking a subtle perfume from her dress by the energy of her gestures. "Ah!" it is to you that we are indebted for this happiness. Monsieur, you have restored to me my uncle. A thousand thanks!"

At this moment, and just as the banker was repeating his wife's words, a knock interrupted them. Louis Marot entered. He was flushed, and in haste. His eyes took in the scene at once.

"Pardon me," he said, "this interruption, but I am under orders from the Minister of War. My horse

awaits me, and I have but a moment to say adieu. Madelon, you will not forget me?"

The eyes of Madelon gave him his answer. He pressed the Fencing Master's hand, said a word to Lavoison, bowed to the company, and disappeared.

Half an hour later Pierre Deslond and his daughter were driving towards Bellevue in the gilded chariot of the rich banker.

CHAPTER XII.

A WASP AMONG THE ROSES.

The Spring had given place to Summer. Deslond and his daughter had, indeed, found an asylum in the chateau of the banker. Madame Baudin and Madelon were as sisters, and in congenial tastes found perpetual pleasure in their friendship. Together they now came out upon the terrace. The sun was sinking, and his last rays lit up the landscape. But who would have studied the scenery in presence of two such brilliant women! Madelon was no longer the shrinking girl we have seen before. Contact with her cousin, a sense of ease, freedom from care, and, above all, love, had expanded the bud into the blossom; and, let us be candid, she had the milliner of Madame Baudin.

Julie, however, studied the scene. Then she said: "The evening promises to be all that we could ask. To-night, Madelon, you must look your best, in honor of my birth-day fete. Would you believe it? I am

twenty-seven years old this day, and feel myself an old woman. Ah! little one, I renew my youth in you."

Julie said this with perfect gravity. She had been married five years to a wealthy and indulgent man, old enough to be her father, and had sacrificed many of her tastes; so that, measuring time by the restraints in which she lived, she seriously fancied herself an old woman.

Madelon smiled as she answered: "It is droll that you should talk thus of yourself. Your mirror would tell you a different story."

At this moment, a *laquais*, in rich livery, approached the pair, and handed to Madelon a letter.

"Permit me," she said, and broke the seal. A deep flush overspread her face and neck, her lips parted in a smile, and she cried out in a tone of exquisite delight, "Julie, he is coming!"

"And who is this unknown knight, Madelon? Monsieur Marot, by the color of your cheeks."

"Yes, Louis Marot. He tells me—but, here, read his letter for yourself."

Madame Baudin glanced at the paper and replied: "This friend of yours seems to be a busy man. His stay is to be short, and I must have him here this evening to see how his Madelon has improved during his absence."

At this moment the banker and Deslond joined them. "Ah! ladies!" cried that stout and rosy gen-gentleman, "if I may be permitted—ah—you look—ah—like two roses." And Monsieur Baudin took a prodigious pinch of snuff, and felt that glow of satisfaction which accompanies the consciousness of a fine speech, or a good action.

Pierre was very much of the banker's opinion, but being, as he said himself, infirm of eloquence, and uncouth of speech, he contented himself with an energetic nod of approval.

"And now," said Madame Baudin, "Madelon and I must go to make our sacrifices to the Graces."

Already the darkness had gathered, and the trees about the chateau began to sparkle with variegated lamps. A sudden rushing sound broke on the tranquil air, and a glittering *jet d' eau* shot up from the

terrace. The lights within the chateau were rapidly multiplied, and in the midst of these splendors the excellent Monsieur Baudin felt a glow of pride and satisfaction at the thought that the birth-day of his wife was to be celebrated not unworthily.

At this moment the first carriage passed the porter's lodge. It contained General Bravard and our old acquaintance, Desselais. He sat with his hat pulled over his eyes, but when the glare of an occasional lamp fell upon his face it was of a stony pallor. Since we last saw him his life had been little better than desperate, and in place of wine he had substituted brandy. This was the nearest approach he had made to Paris since his memorable adventure at Lavoison's. His companion was speaking as they passed the gate.

"Desselais," he said, "this is folly. Why vex yourself about your—what d'ye call her?—your Madelon? This conduct in a man who knows the world is beyond belief." And, by way of enforcing his remark, General Bravard shrugged his shoulders, and thumped upon the bottom of the carriage with his sword.

"Tush," cried Desselais, "preach me no sermons. I know all that, and yet I am—an ass."

"Upon that point," replied his companion, with a dry smile, "I shall not venture an opinion."

Suddenly Desselais pulled the check string, and the carriage stopped opposite a dense growth of trees.

"Here," said he, "I leave you."

"Remember, then," cried Bravard, "we must have no scenes—no violence!"

Desselais made no answer, but leaped from the carriage and disappeared.

"Humph!" ejaculated the General, "this cousin of mine is insufferable. Were it not for the fine fortune my good uncle, the contractor, left him, I should cut his acquaintance; but, as it is, I am his heir at law, and if he dies unmarried I shall roll in this carriage as my own."

For the next hour there was an incessant rumble of wheels through the grounds of the chateau. Soldiers and senators, and wits and scholars, and brilliant women thronged the salons, or sauntered on the terraces. Monsieur Baudin was in raptures, and took

snuff with an energy he had never exhibited before. Deslond, as he said, had intended to beat an early retreat, but the beauty of Madelon had so gratified him, that he remained to watch her innocent enjoyment. And now Deslond was puzzled by a face. Madelon was hanging on the arm of a Colonel of the Line.

"*Peste!*" said the old man, "they seem good friends!"

Then he suddenly rubbed his eyes, and cried out in a tone which made those about him smile, "A thousand devils! but it is Monsieur Marot."

This discovery filled the heart of old Pierre with delight, for in his eyes a field officer of the French army was little less than a demi-god; what was better, a possible Marshal. At this moment Marot's eyes rested on Deslond. At once Madelon and the brave Colonel began to make their way towards the old man. They saluted each other cordially.

"Come," said Marot, "my good friend; let us get upon the terrace, where we can talk.

Deslond followed, still bewildered, and the three sauntered slowly down the marble steps, slowly by the

great fountain, and slowly on into the tender gloom of the shaded walks. In an open space, where the dim light shone on a statue of Diana, the trio halted.

"And now," said Marot, in a soft voice, but not in a low tone, for character and profession had made him ignorant of this, "and now I ask you for your daughter. We are on the eve of stirring events, and I am ambitious to call Madelon my wife, old man, before I march."

As the soldier spoke, the black shadow of the statue moved. Desselais crouched down at its base, and ground his teeth in an impotent fury.

Deslond answered: "Plain talk is to my taste. Fine words ram blank cartridges. You would marry Madelon? I give her to you. But when, is a question to be considered further. And—humph! I have misplaced my snuff-box. Come let us return."

And the old soldier lagged in the rear, and wiped his eyes more than once before he reached the terrace. On their return they met General Bravard, who was in search of Desselais. Chance led him to the spot where his kinsman stood.

As he recognized him, Bravard said: "Ah! I am in luck. I was in search of you."

"And you," replied Desselais, "are the man above all others whom I would see. You must do me a service."

"Ask anything but money," was the answer. "If you want advice, now, I'm your man."

"*Peste!*" cried Desselais, "no jesting. I am in deadly earnest. There is a man here whom I hate."

"A friend of yours?"

"A friend? No. I tell you I hate him. He is my enemy." And thus speaking he waved his arms above his head, and ground out a bitter imprecation through his clenched teeth.

"Very good," was the cool reply, "but you forget that the dictionary of life often gives the same meaning to those words; in fact, they are often synonyms."

"Pshaw!" cried Desselais. "Keep that for the salon! There is a man here whom I would meet at moonrise."

"Sunrise would be better," said the General.

"In this case there can be no delay—not a minute."

"You are bent on throat-cutting?"

"You torment me with your devlish composure. Will you arrange this for me?"

"Remember the Imperial decree! This would touch my commission."

"Curse your commission! But remember this, if I fall, you are my next of kin."

"Ha! Ha! Ha!" laughed the General. "Your logic is not to be resisted. But two things are necessary. We must go beyond the grounds of Monsieur Baudin. You promise that?"

"Yes. It matters nothing to me about the place, so there is no delay."

"Next, then, what is his name?"

"Marot—Louis Marot."

"The devil! Well, let me arrange. I will order the carriage to the West gate. I will send for swords; and meet me here in an hour."

General Bravard moved off at a rapid pace, and Desselais retired to the base of the statue. He had hardly regained his position when Madelon and Monsieur Lavoison sauntered by with a gay troop. They

passed so close to his place of concealment that he could hear the rustle of her dress and see the glitter of the pearls on her neck. He heard her speak as if in answer to a question from her companion. Her words were few and simple, but they sent a pang of jealous rage and pain to the heart of Desselais.

She said: "Yes, I am happy. I think I loved him from the first, and then—

"Ha! Ha! Ha!" laughed Lavoison. "Pardon me for spoiling the poetry of our talk, but I thought of that first day when we saw our Colonel in disguise, and how my friend Desselais played battering ram!"

And they passed on under the shadow of the trees laughing. At this moment a man, in a military undress, came into the light, bearing a bundle under his arm. He looked around. Then he spoke aloud:

"The West gate? Where the devil is the West gate? I'll go and inquire."

Saying this he deposited his burthen under the shadow of a tree, and as he did so Desselais heard a metallic click, which filled him with a savage joy; he understood this was the servant with the swords. A

hasty footfall approached, and General Bravard appeared. Desselais sprang from his place of concealment.

"Well, my friend," said the General, "the pleasure you desired is denied you."

"Denied me? How?"

"Easily enough. This fellow will not fight."

"Coward! I will degrade him!"

"With all my heart! And take my advice. Go back to my quarters. Good night."

Again General Bravard retired, and it is no injustice to that warrior to say that being next of kin to Desselais, he was chagrind at the failure of his mission.

Bravard had hardly disappeared when Madelon and Lavoison returned at the same slow pace. They were within a few steps of the statue when a gentlemen following them rushed impetuously up to the Surgeon, and in words broken by lack of breath and agitation, implored him to render succor to Monsieur Aubin, who had fallen in a fit.

"Here, then," cried the Surgeon, "Madelon, upon this bench I will leave you, but only for a moment.

I will find means to send Marot, or your father."

"Nay, never trouble yourself about me," said Madelon, "but fly to the unfortunate!"

She was alone but for a moment. Desselais saw his opportunity. Madelon looked up and recognized him. His face was white, his hair and dress disordered.

"You here?" she asked, and her tone was cold and a little scornful.

"Yes," said he in a hoarse whisper. "Yes, I am here. I have heard all your foolish talk, and I tell you—do you hear me?—I swear that you shall never be that man's wife. Listen, my carriage is at the West gate, fly with me—"

"Monsieur," said Madelon, "this is folly—make way, sir, none but cowards try to frighten women."

Desselais uttered a terrible curse. He heard footsteps approaching; two persons were coming at a rapid pace, and from different directions. The first upon the scene was Marot.

"Sir," said he, "what is the meaning of this outrage?"

He had not recognized his enemy. In answer, Des-

selais, now beside himself with fury, ran to the swords, snatched them from their hiding place, hurled one towards Marot and broke into a savage peal of laughter.

"Draw! Monsieur," he cried, "draw! I am in luck to-night! The Devil takes sides with me." Wild as he was, he was yet self-possessed enough to see that the servant had returned. His sword was already bare when Madelon sprang before him. He fell back a step and whispered to the man:

"Fifty Napoleons if you hold this girl for one minute."

The temptation was too strong for the new-comer's discretion. He seized Madelon and dragged her aside. Desselais sprang forward, there was the clash of steel, the scream of a woman, the trampling of many feet, the uproar of many voices. Among the number drawn to the scene was Bravard.

"Ha!" said he to himself, "I came near entering on my estate. Desselais you bleed! you are wounded."

"Only a scratch!" was the answer.

General Bravard sighed as he assured himself that such was the fact, then turning to the young soldier

he said: "Colonel Marot, this is in violation of the Imperial decree! It is my painful duty to order you in arrest."

It was thus that the *fete* came to an end, and before the throng separated General Bravard had contrived to inform the great personages present that Colonel Marot was one of the best officers in his Brigade, for it was to this he belonged, but that he was rash and hot-headed, and a great swordsman. And the more the Brigadier praised the Colonel, the darker became the character of his subordinate. General Bravard knew how to stab without flourishing his dagger, or staining his hands.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE PENALTY.

General Bravard filled himself a glass of wine, and pushed the bottle towards his companion.

"Come," he said, "Desselais, you are hard to satisfy. Faith! I call it quick work! It is not a fortnight since your adventure, and here we are at the end of the trial, and the papers before the Minister of War!"

"Hard to satisfy?" cried Desselais, tossing off a tumbler of wine, at a gulp, "Hard to satisfy? I tell you that I hate this man!—that I burn personally to avenge myself!" and he started up in a fit of passion.

"Tush, man!" said Bravard, "this is childish. You pant for vengeance, and I tell you that his degradation is certain. What more do you want?"

"But, is his degradation certain?" asked Desselais.

"Beyond a doubt. The fantastic fool summoned no witness. That girl would have saved him; but he refused to permit her appearance. He called this deli-

cacy, I presume; I call it folly. And between ourselves, Desselais, I am not sorry, for I hate him myself."

"Ah! you hate him? Your hate is nothing to mine. But why?"

"Well, I am not given to strong emotions—umph! the bottle is empty!—and yet my hate is very genuine. I have a shrewd suspicion that he stood an excellent chance to have my Brigade. Think of that! and then fancy that I love him if you can! Now, as the case stands, there is no chance of this. The feeling against him is one of exasperation. He broke the Imperial decree, and what is perhaps worse, violated the hospitality of Monsieur Baudin. He will be broken to the ranks. Then away goes his fine romance, and away goes a rival in my profession, which is that of arms, and away goes a rival in yours, which is—love-making."

"But," said Desselais, "I am not so certain of this. Madelon and Madame Baudin will appeal to the Minister of War."

"Make yourself easy, my brave cousin," said Bravard, with a smile, "I think the story has been so told

to the Minister that an appeal would be in vain. Tush man! his conviction was necessary to me, and without his punishment I lose *my* game. Do you understand?"

"And he will feel this, will he? Deeply, keenly, bitterly?"

"Feel it!" cried Bravard, "why man, death would be a blessing in comparison. He loses rank, reputation, pay, promotion, and the fair Madelon, all at one blow! He is routed, horse, foot and dragoons!"

Desselais smiled bitterly at this picture, and took the empty bottle to refill his glass. At this both men laughed and the General touched his *sonnette*, saying as he did so: "Yes, we will drink his health."

The wine was brought, and the mocking ceremony performed with a diabolical satisfaction.

"Coward!" cried Desselais, replacing his glass upon the table with such violence as to shatter it, at which the General smiled, while inwardly he cursed him as an awkward brute, "Coward, *scelerat!* he deserved it!"

"Nay," said Bravard, "you make a great mistake. Coward he is not, rather a fool. I have seen him charge through a fire which the Devil would have

found uncomfortably hot. Ass if you choose, but not coward!"

"Why then refuse to fight?" asked Desselais, who resented in his own mind the defense of Marot's courage, "Why then refuse to fight?"

"Humph!" was the answer, "the reason, if it may be called by that name, is too absurd almost to be told. He is a great friend to a meddlesome Priest—Father Paul I think they call him—and the old hypocrite has pursuaded him that it is a sin—mark you!—to cut throats—unless you are paid for it! Was there ever anything so absurd? Just Heaven! I am bewildered at such folly!"

But Desselais, the baser villian of the two, still clung to his doubts, and cried in a tone of scornful incredulity, "but surely you do not believe this story?"

"Believe it? Certainly. The man is an idiot, and idiots are capable of anything—even of a conscience."

At this moment they were interrupted by a smart rap at the door.

"Enter!" cried Bravard, and in obedience to the word Captain Clarion presented himself.

"Ah!" said the General, who considered himself one of the most amiable men in the French army, "Ah! you are in good time. Let me fill you a glass of wine!"

At that moment Bravard could have embraced his Aide, for he was terribly afflicted at the company of his savage kinsman. Captain Clarion was a handsome young fellow, who found his religion in the tri-color, and beheld one of its high Priests in every General officer. Having drank his wine, with a shower of civilities upon his companions, he drew forth a great official document and presented it to Bravard.

"From Paris?" asked the General.

"From Paris, and within the hour."

"By your permission, gentlemen," said Bravard, and he tore open the paper. With a rapid glance he discovered its contents. His face flushed, and his eyes sparkled with pleasure.

"Ha," he cried, "Clarion! good news! We move to-morrow."

Speaking thus, Bravard buckled on his sword, and turning to Desselais held out a paper.

"There," said he, "my brave cousin, is the Minister's approval of the sentence on your friend. Colonel Marot is Colonel no longer! He marches in the ranks to-morrow."

"In the ranks?" cried Desselais.

"Yes, in the ranks, musket on shoulder and knapsack on back!"

"Then," sneered Desselais, with a diabolical grin, "I must be there to see him off."

"Yes," said Bravard, settling his chapeau on his head, and drawing on his gloves, "Yes, that will be a polite attention. Adieu."

And with a wave of his hand General Bravard sallied out, followed by Captain Clarion, both officers trailing their sabres as they strode, and making a prodigious clatter.

CHAPTER XIV.

MONSIEUR LAVOISON SHOWS HIMSELF TO BE A MAN OF AFFAIRS.

If we could register with accuracy, and, from time to time, compare our emotions, we would begin to doubt our own identity, and end by comprehending, in part, the infinite capacities of our spiritual nature. The most severe intelligence is incapable of such comparison, and hence with nearly all of us the last emotion seems the most intense. It was for the lack of this ability that Madame Baudin and Madelon assured themselves that they were more wretched than they had ever been. Both were in error, for both had forgotten. When Julie found herself deprived of her brave father, when Madelon's excellent mother died, they had been more deeply afflicted than they were now. But the present pain was sharper than the memory of that which was past. Surprise had given a keener edge to their grief. Marot's offence, if any he had committed, was trivial in comparison with its

punishment. This they had not expected. Excluded from the trial by the delicacy of Marot, they had endeavored to enlighten the Minister of War. He had heard them with patience, and the most charming air of politeness; but when the interview was over he had taken a pinch of snuff, and had said to himself:

"Faith! I believe both these pretty women are in love with this young fellow! But we must make an example—and I will make a note of it."

When the finding of the Court came, he approved it without hesitation, and forgot to make his note.

Thus it happened that Julie and Madelon were overwhelmed at the severity of the sentence. It was too late to intervene. The French army was in motion. Marot had marched, and Desselais was triumphant. As for Captain Deslond, he had been speechless with grief and rage. He began to doubt even the issue of the campaign, and found consolation only in the society of the Imperial Messenger, who, from time to time, visited the chateau, and who promised, with great heat, never to leave the case of Marot until justice was done the unhappy youth.

Monsieur Baudin shared in the general distress in a mild way, and Lavoison was the only one of the little group interested in Marot who professed to be hopeful of the young soldier's future. At short intervals he came to the chateau, and was always a welcome guest, for he brought cheering words and a keen wit devoted to the service of his friends. But the truth was, Lavoison could give himself no satisfactory reasons for his more hopeful view of the young soldier's case. Still he resolutely maintained that speedy justice would be done, and did so with such heat that a keen observer would have seen that often he was as anxious to persuade himself of the truth of his professed convictions as to convince his friends.

Already Marot was on the territory of the enemy. The splendid genius of the Emperor was as yet invincible. The pride and vanity of France were gratified. What did it matter to the Minister of War that he had forgotten to make the note in Marot's case, which he had promised?

It was on the morning of a day when the *Moniteur* had blazed with a bulletin announcing a victory, that

Lavoison found himself on his way to the chateau. He felt a profound interest in his friends. Through them he had found that there is an exquisite pleasure in good actions. He was rarely seen at the cafes and theatres, for he had become a student. His friendship for the old Fencing Master was unaffected, and having constituted himself, in part, his guardian, he was now about to suggest to him a necessary piece of business. Perhaps Lavoison, like all persons unaccustomed to affairs, exaggerated the importance of that he had in hand, which, however, he flattered himself had been carried forward with address. It was of this that he thought as he rode through the gateway of the chateau. Dismounted, he hurried into the salon, where Madame Baudin received him.

"Ah! my friend!" she cried, holding out her hand, "Ah! my friend, your presence is sunshine to us! You are always welcome."

"And what could be fitter for the flowers I find here than sunshine?" cried Lavoison with his most gallant air. "But," continued he, "I have a word for my brave friend, the Captain here—nay, Madame, it

is for you to hear, and upon it you can advise us. I pride myself on this negotiation, and hope for your approval and that of Madelon."

Here he cast a glance over the salon, which Madame Baudin interpreted and answered: "Ah! dear Madelon has heard of this blood-brought victory of ours, and keeps her chamber. The *fete* days of France are fasts to her, poor child."

"It is as I supposed," said Lavoison. "Suspense is terrible! But, I must not forget my affair. Captain Deslond, I have found a purchaser for your fencing school. After much diplomacy I bring you an offer of five hundred francs; too little, it is true, but not to be despised."

The old man was startled at this announcement, and replied vaguely, "But should I not be selling my independence?"

"Hush!" cried Madame Baudin, "remember that here you have found the home of your honorable age. Monsieur Lavoison, I will answer for him. He accepts your offer with gratitude and thanks."

Thus did the beautiful woman, full of energy and

decision, settle the question for her uncle, who, in truth, was ready to lay down his gauntlets and his art.

"Madame," cried Lavoison, "you are as wise as"— He was about to say "as you are beautiful," but he left the words unspoken, while the lady smiled and blushed her answer. "It is settled, then, my brave friend, save that you must personally attend to turning over your school to the new master. What say you to doing this to-morrow?"

"As you will," said the old man, "at noon to-morrow;" and he rose, filled with conflicting emotions, and passed slowly out on the terrace.

A shadow fell over the face of Lavoison, and he said to himself: "My old friend must be looked after. Emotions seem to shake him too much for safety."

With the departure of Deslond, the conversation flagged. At last the silence grew oppressive. Lavoison made his farewell, and rode back to Paris at a foot pace, full of thought. Before he reached the barrier, he had begun seriously to meditate a campaign under the tri-color.

CHAPTER XV.

HIC VICTOR REPONO CAESTUS ARTEMQUE.

The Fencing Master's room had undergone no change during his absence. The impliments of his art still hung upon the walls, and the little knots of ribbon showed their gay colors undimned. Lavoison had, as he expressed it, outrun his shadow, in bringing together the group of pupils whom we have already seen in this same apartment. In addition, he had brought the man who was to snceed Deslond.

Monsieur Fleuret was a tall, sinewy fellow, who perpetually reminded his hearers of the fact that he had been *Maitre d'Arms* to the immortal Fifty-second Regiment of the Line. He was a skillful swordsman, and told marvellous stories of his performances with the pistol. He stood in the middle of the hall, clad in a half military costume, and carried a brass-bound case under his arm.

"Yes," he said, "gentlemen, I shall teach also the

art of the pistol. Here have I brought also a target, and you shall soon be able to kill your hundred pigeons above the roofs—pigeons upon full flight. Yes, gentlemen, I have been thought to have skill with the pistol as well as the sword! When I was in the Fifty-second Regiment of the Line, my Colonel stuck a letter on a board.

He said: "Fleuret, you see this?"

I said, "Yes, my Colonel."

He said, "Look well!"

I said, "I see perfectly."

"Then my Colonel stepped off twenty paces—he had long legs gentlemen—turned me the back of the board—you understand, gentlemen, the back of the board—and, while he held me the board, called out: 'Ready! Aim! Fire!' And, gentlemen, my bullet went straight through that letter, which I no longer saw. Ah! ha! I had measured the distances with my eye, and one side of that board was the same to me as the other!"

How long Monsieur Fleuret would have continued in this strain it is impossible to say, but at this mo-

ment Deslond appeared on the threshold. The old man was glad to lay aside his foil, but it was with an emotion of sadness, nevertheless, that he entered the familiar room.

At once Monsieur Fleuret moved forward. His deportment was a study, and the majesty of his air was not lost upon his gay pupils. The formal transfer of the school was effected, and the new Master was about to begin his instructions, when the old man in brown abruptly entered. His habitual repose had given place to an eager air. His bright eyes rested on Deslond, and his whole face became radiant with a smile.

"Ah!" he cried, "Old friend, I am bearer of good news!"

Pierre turned pale and red by turns, but rather seemed to gasp for breath than to attempt to speak.

The man in brown continued in the midst of a dead silence, "know first of all that your name has been placed on the pension list!"

At this announcement the company shouted with delight. The speaker held up his hand. They under-

stood that this was not all. "And I have tidings of Marot!"

"A thousand thanks!" stammered Pierre.

"Thank not man, but God," said the old man with dignity.

Deslond bowed his head and the great tears streamed down his cheeks. Lavoison stood beside him.

"You have tidings of Marot? Good tidings, by your face?" said the Surgeon.

"Yes, good tidings. In the last battle General Bravard was killed and Marot was promoted Captain on the field."

The old soldier clasped his hands and cried out in a shrill voice: "Thank God, the unjust stain is wiped away from a brave man's name!"

He tottered for a moment and fell into the arms of Lavoison.

"Stand back! gentlemen," cried the Surgeon, in a tone of authority. "Stand back! He needs air. Throw open the door!"

Speaking thus, he stretched Deslond upon the floor. A flush came upon his forehead. He opened his eyes

and smiled on Lavoison. Then he held out his hand and said: "Aid me to rise. It is nothing. I am well."

At this moment the old man who had brought the good news appeared with a flask of wine, and Deslond, revived by it, took a seat against the wall, bewildered, eager, full of curiosity, but happy.

"And now," comrade, he said, "by what name am I to thank you? Remember, as yet it is unknown to me."

"My name? Well, give me your hand. Now do not start. I hope it will amuse you. I am that rascally old fellow, Father Paul."

"It is as I suspected," said Pierre, pressing the good Priest's hand in both his own. "It is as I suspected."

"And now," said Lavoison, "I must assert my authority. My brave friend, your room is as you left it. Withdraw a while with the good father, and compose yourself."

When the two old men had withdrawn, a new impulse was given to the conversation by the arrival of one of the former pupils of the school.

"Ah! Lavoison," he cried, "I have found you! I

have a piece of rare news, which you will enjoy. Your friend—Bah! recall his name—he who made Desselais play battering-ram!"

"Marot—Louis Marot," answered the Surgeon.

"Ah! yes, Marot. Well, he has been promoted Colonel."

"Captain, I think," said Lavoison.

"No, Colonel. I have a cousin who is a clerk to the Minister of War, and he told me that the fact was publicly announced. He said, moreover, that they would have made him General of Brigade, but for his foolish affair in old Baudin's garden!"

"Faith!" cried the Surgeon, "the news is like good wine, it grows better as it grows older! Now, a word in your ear. Tell your cousin there was no duel. Marot only defended a lady against insult."

"Then," said the youth whose cousin was a clerk to the Minister of War, "if this can be established his further promotion is beyond a doubt."

During all this time Monsieur Fleuret was growing more and more impatient. His pupils were absorbed in talking of a man of whom he had never heard, and

for half an hour he had not been able to speak once of the Fifty-second Regiment of the Line.

He determined on a bold stroke to impress the company. He brought forth his target and adjusted it on its tripod. The effect was instantaneous: he became at once the centre of attraction. Next he produced the pistols, which were superbly mounted in silver.

"These," said he, admiring them, "these, gentlemen, men, are spoils of war. When I was in the Fifty-second I captured these from an Austrian. They were made by the perfidious English. There is the mark, and, *Parbleu!* they came naturally into the hands of a Frenchman. Now, then, gentlemen, they are loaded. Who will fire the first shot?"

By accident he selected Lavoison, or perhaps because he saw that he was a person of authority among his comrades. The Surgeon took the pistol which Monsieur Fleuret extended, and the more readily because he saw that Desselais, his face disfigured by indulgence in bad passions and brandy, had joined the company.

"Now," said Lavoison, "who can give me a playing card?"

"It happens," said the *Maitre d'Arms*, with a grimace, "it happens that I can supply Monsieur," and he drew a pack of well-used cards from his bosom as he spoke. Lavoison selected the ace of clubs, attached it to the target, stepped off twenty paces, wheeled and fired.

"The second pistol," he said.

This he discharged with the same rapidity. The pupils pressed forward and gathered in a group about the target. Lavoison, they saw to their amazement, had converted the ace into a tray.

"And now," said the Surgeon to Desselais, "a word with you, Monsieur."

The two men drew themselves apart from the company.

"I desire to ask," said Lavoison, "if you received fifty Napoleons which I returned to you?"

"Yes," was the sullen answer.

"That is sufficient," said Lavoison.

"Not so!" cried Desselais, "you owe me an atonement! Say when and where?"

"Pish!" ejaculated the Surgeon, "you see what I can do with the pistol! I could pick that diamond out of your bosom at twenty paces. Think better of it."

Desselais was no coward; but he took the advice of Lavoison."

CHAPTER XVI.

MADAME BAUDIN ATTENDS TO A PIECE OF BUSINESS.

The Summer had departed, the leaves were falling, and the mists of evening, which came up from the distant river, were chill and damp. Madame Baudin and Madelon sat together, and a part of their history was told in their attire. Both were in mourning. Pierre Deslond had been found dead in his bed, with a serene smile upon his lips, and had been buried, amid the tears of his friends, by Father Paul. But this was not all: Madame Baudin found herself, also, a widow, and the rich banker had been laid in Pere la Chaise, then newly consecrated.

Cares, pain, and anxiety had left their traces upon Julie and Madelon, but their beauty was unimpaired. The widow was more thoughtful in appearance. Her energy, sometimes abrupt and dramatic, had given place to an air of repose and dignity.

Madelon had changed into a woman of rare and

spirituelle beauty. The intense brilliancy of her com-complexion was subdued; her face was thinner; but what she had lost in color, she had gained in expression.

In looking at these two fair women one saw that grief can often do for the human face what the mist does for the landscape.

Madame Baudin held a book in her hand from which she had been reading. It was one of the plays of that great man of whom Napoleon said, that had he lived in his day he would have made him a Prince.

"It is wonderful," said Madame Baudin, slowly stretching forth her hand, with something of her old manner in the gesture. "It is wonderful to see how the genius of Cornille has made the impossible appear not only possible, but reasonable. There could not have been a woman, even in Spain, like Chimene, yet we forget this in the play, and it is only when one thinks over it, that one sees the great audacity and the great genius of the Poet."

And Madame Baudin's color rose as she spoke. Perhaps she sighed to think of her career, interrupted just as she had begun to feel herself mistress of her art.

"Yes," said Madelon, who was in full sympathy with her cousin's tastes, "yes, Cornille felt that himself, I think, for he only suggests the strange marriage of Chimene and Rodrigue. But, as you say, he has rendered the impossible reasonable in appearance.

"It is here," cried Julie, starting up, "that great geniuses delight to show their power. They take exceptions to the familiar rule. It is thus that Cornille has produced Le Cid, and the English Shakespeare his Hamlet!"

And Madame Baudin swept across the room with a stately air, fired by her theme, and warmed by her admiration of the Poet. It was true that she had loved her art, true also that she had married the rich banker under what she felt to be a necessity, and true that she had made him a dutiful wife. This thought, added to the reflection that her marriage had given great happiness to her dying mother, made her chief comfort in reviewing the past. It is the motive which gives complexion to the act. As she paced the floor she continued a rapid criticism on the author whose works were in her hand, and the justice of her

reflections showed that she had been a student not unworthy of the text.

A tap upon the door arrested her. "Enter," she said, and Louison, her maid, obeyed the permission.

"Madame," said she, making a reverence, Monsieur Causal is below, and waits your pleasure.

Madelon rose. "Nay!" cried Madame Baudin. "Remain! I have no secrets from you. Louison, show Monsieur Causal up. I shall be glad," she continued, "to have done with this. Until I hear his report I can form no plans for the future, and in these, little one, I shall want your aid."

At this moment Monsieur Causal entered. He was a Notary of the old school, and would have been scandalized had he been mistaken for anything but a Notary. He was small, old, honest, well educated, and as agreeable as a man can be who has but one idea—that of his own profession.

"Ah! Monsieur Causal," said Julie, receiving him with a grave smile and outstretched hand, "ah! you are punctual. Be seated. You must need repose after your journey!"

"I trust, Madame," replied the little man, "that I shall never be convicted of delay in your service; and, as for fatigue—Ha! I find my pleasure in occupation!"

Seating herself at an ebony table, curiously inlaid, she invited the Notary to a place beside her. Monsieur Causal next drew out a bundle of papers. These he spread out methodically before him, glanced from Madame Baudin to Madelon and back, understood that he was to proceed, and accordingly began: "I have gone over all the books and papers of your late husband, and have found that two years ago he entered into a speculation in saltpetre, which he imported for the manufacture of powder. His success was great, his profits enormous—ah! Madame, if he had stopped there! If he had stopped there!"

"But he did not?" said Madame Baudin.

"On the contrary. He was inspired to new adventures. Ships were bought, manned, equipped, sent forth. The calculation was, that if one in three reached port the profits would be superb. But one after another of these ships fell into the hands of the

piratical English. Then came his troubles, and his fortune was gone. When he understood this, my excellent friend was unequal to the task of keeping up, and—and"— Here a sedate look of satisfaction came into the Notary's face as he concluded: "And I do not remember to have seen such a funeral as his in thirty years."

This expression was but transitory. A deep gloom settled on the old man's face. Evidently he had not finished his story.

"Proceed," said Madame Baudin, "I wish to understand my position in all its details."

Monsieur Causal prided himself on being a Notary, but his deportment was not exactly that of a prompt business man on this occasion. Madame Baudin grew a shade paler as she inquired:

"Am I to understand that his wealth has all been swept away?"

"All," repeated the Notary, looking down at his papers.

"The chateau?"

"Yes, the chateau."

"Then I have nothing left," said Madame Baudin.

"Pardon me," replied Monsieur Causal, "pardon me! You have a small annuity secured to you."

This reflection seemed to afflict the Notary, and the words he added explained his evident chagrin.

"Ah, Madame! You remember I had the honor to draw the contract of marriage, and you perhaps remember that my excellent patron, your late husband, desired to settle on you a handsome sum. It was you who objected. Your delicacy was exquisite, but it proves inconvenient."

And the Notary said to himself that this vexation came from substituting sentiment in the place of business, a thing, however, of which, to do him justice, he was not himself incapable.

"All swept away!" said Madame Baudin, leaning back and speaking rather to herself than the Notary.

"Such, Madame is the fact!" said Causal, and glad to escape his uncomfortable feelings in the details of his case, he continued, pointing to a great sheet, covered with laborious calculations: "The sum total of debts and losses is heavy. It foots up 28,715,750

francs—a prodigious sum truly!—and the entire property available for the payment amounts to the estimated value of 28,700,000 francs. This you will perceive leaves a balance of 15,750 francs. Ah, Madame! —this in a tone of mingled sorrow and admiration— Ah, Madame! if your husband had succeeded he would have been the richest man in France!"

"Ah! would have been!" cried Julie, "would have been! but as the case stands I am one of the poorest women!"

At this moment Madame Baudin felt a firm but tender embrace, and a sweet, low voice whispered in her ear: "Courage! my sister; courage! Remember there is a good God above us who, Father Paul says, looks even to the fall of a sparrow."

Monsieur Causal, Notary as he was, found it convenient to make a survey of the landscape, and the two women were left a moment to themselves. Monsieur Causal cleared his throat vehemently.

"Madame," said he, "I was about to assure you that there is no need to vacate the chateau for the next eight months, if it be your pleasure to remain.

And, Madame, remember your excellent husband laid the foundation of my fortune. The Notary of the great banker became a very different person from Causal in a garret. Think not, Madame, that I have forgotten this! Nor has my wife. She has charged me to deliver this letter."

The Notary presented it with a softness of voice, and an air of respect, which made him look very unlike the man of dry forms and hard maxims which he boasted himself to be. Madame Baudin took the paper, and for the first time in the interview her firmness seemed on the point of deserting her.

"For the present, Madame," said Causal, "I retire," and the little Notary escaped to walk upon the terrace.

"Ah!" said he to himself, "all this comes through neglect of sound maxims! Had she accepted the annuity, she would have still been rich."

Madame Baudin, a woman of energy and decision, was not long in recovering her composure. "This," said she, stroking the glossy head of her companion, "this is a painful surprise to me, and overthrows some of my air-castles."

"But," said Madelon, "you have your genius, your reputation, and in need can resume your art."

"No," said Julie, "no, that door is closed. Listen: You never knew the secret of my marriage. In the first dawn of my success upon the stage, my voice began to fail me. The wisest Doctors tried their skill in vain. Then I yielded to the importunities of my mother. My husband was painfully sensitive, you know, upon this subject, and I must pay his memory the homage of respecting his prejudices. And now," she said, "I must think over this sad news. Say adieu for me to Monsieur Causal.'

CHAPTER XVII.

HOW MADELON WAS INSPIRED BY A SUDDEN THOUGHT.

Madelon was not left to meditate on the amazing disclosure made by the Notary. Louison presented herself.

"Mademoiselle," she said, "Madame instructs me to say that Madame Cazales and M'lle Elise are below. If you are equal to the reception of this company, Madame begs that you will say a word to them for her in excuse. She is not visible."

This was a relief to Madelon. Madame Cazales had been absent for more than two months in Normandy, and on her return had felt it necessary to call with her daughter upon her fair neighbor. Perhaps this necessity was felt to be more imperative because she had a son, Monsienr Alphonse, who, in her opinion, would make a capital successor to the lamented Baudin. As Madelon entered the *salon* Madame Cazales and Elise came forward with the sympathy of friendship

painted on their faces, the warmth of affection in their manners.

"We have just returned," cried Madame Cazales.

"Within the week," said her daughter.

"Ah!" continued Madame, "Ah! it was terrible! The news reached us in Normandy and plunged us into grief. Poor Julie is one of my chief favorites!"

Madelon was moved by such warmth: "Dear friends," she said, "my cousin is ill to-day, and bids me make her excuses; but I will repeat your kind words and I know they will give her a genuine pleasure."

"It is terrible to think of!" cried Madame Cazales, clasping her hands, and looking at the chandalier.

"Does Julie look well in black?" asked Elise, in the tone of solicitude in which one enquires of the health of a dear friend dangerously ill.

"Ah!" cried Madame Cazales, following up this suggestion, "ah! Julie must be charming in mourning—like a romantic Nun—but entreat her not to ignore lace; black without a bit of lace about the throat and at the wrists is too trying to the complexion.

Tell her from me that when I was so unhappy as to lose Monsieur Cazales I tried the experiment of unmitigated black; but though I was in despair I abandoned it."

Madelon smiled in despite of herself, but before she could frame an answer, for to this speech one did not come spontaneously, her visitor continued.

"And tell her further, for Elise as well as for myself, that she must not hide herself away. We expect her to spend at least a month with us. She shall be as secluded as she wishes, and you, Madelon, must accompany her!"

The young girl said to herself: "How kind! how tender!"

Madame Cazales said in her mind: "With this opportunity Alphonse must be a fool if he does not settle himself for life, and help the widow to spend her millions."

"And I," cried Elise, "I shall positively lay violent hands on myself if she refuses."

Madelon's eyes were suffused with tears. She felt that the world was not all heartlessness, and warm

with the emotion of gratitude to these generous friends, she answered: "Thanks! a thousand thanks. This will indeed gratify Julie, especially after the great change in her fortunes."

"Change in her fortunes?" asked Madame Cazales, "Change in her fortunes?"

"Change! What change?" cried Elise, with a sudden vivacity, strongly in contrast with her former subdued manner.

"It is a sad change," said Madelon, "and from your warm sympathy I thought perhaps it had reached your ears. In brief, Monsieur Baudin's estate goes to his creditors."

"Mon Dieu!" cried Madame Cazales, "Mon Dieu! His estate goes to his creditors! His whole estate?"

"Yes," answered Madelon, "all goes."

"This takes away my breath!" ejaculated Elise.

"Yes, it is terrible," cried Madame.

"You can now understand," said Madelon, "how your kind words will soothe and comfort her."

Up to this moment the earth itself had not been more solid in the eyes of Madame Cazales than the

enormous wealth of Baudin. Madelon's revelation was to her the *terremoto* which disturbed the foundations of this idea. She was slow to realize the fact but when she fully understood it her manner underwent a change.

She buttoned one of her gloves, rose up, shook out the folds of her dress, and said in a very business-like tone of voice: "This is dreadful, indeed! It would be cruel to intrude upon her solitude. Upon reflection I quite agree with her that it is best not to see company. Mademoiselle Deslond, pray convey to her my corrected opinion."

Elise meantime adjusted her hair at a great mirror, and Madame Cazales coolly took a mental inventory of the sumptuous furniture.

Having finished her survey, she said in a cold tone, "Pray, M'lle Deslond, be so good as to ring for my carriage," and without another word she sauntered down the *salon*.

When the two grand ladies had departed, Madelon moved about the great room like one in a dream. Suddenly, as the mists cleared from her faculties, she

saw the picture of a superb woman, young and beautiful; her head crowned with glorious tresses, her eyes full of splendid fire, her lips firm, red, compressed and scornful; her tall figure imperial in its dignity, her firm and rounded arms stretched out in a passionate gesture. Unconsciously she had paused before one of the many mirrors which reflected the splendors by which she was surrounded. She beheld her own image. The color deepened on her face: she blushed to realize her own beauty. Then a sudden lustre kindled in her eyes at the dawn of a new thought in her mind. She swept back the waving masses of her hair, looked long and steadily in the glass, then cried aloud in a resolute voice: "Yes, I think I could achieve it!"

CHAPTER XVIII.

MADELON CHOOSES HER CAREER.

There are few who can review the events of their own lives with justice to themselves, or with justice to Heaven.

Niobe wept over her children: it mattered not to her that the arrows beneath which they fell came from the bow of a God.

The hard facts of our destiny smite us like stones from the sling of Fate, and we ask why they were hurled at us? Why did this one escape to the right that one to the left?

Philosophy affects to answer with its doctrine of compensation. Religion whispers its tender assurance of an overruling Providence, but it is long before the heart, in a tumult of grief, allows the mind to apply these consolations.

It is not until passion is subdued, or egotism

brought low, that we find ourselves in the serene atmosphere in which we can judge ourselves, or the fortune which has attended us. What wonder is it, then, that Madelon, rich only in premature griefs and anxieties, was bewildered? Madame Cazales had wounded her sorrow, inflamed her anger, and at a glance had shown her the altered position of her affairs. But at the first blow her generous temper had been aroused in behalf of her cousin.

As she now sat in the seclusion of her chamber, she was thinking of herself. To think is an art, Rousseau tells us—an art to be learned as other arts, and most difficult to acquire. It is difficult even when the thought is speculative; but when one thinks with the view of shaping a supreme action, it becomes a severe labor. Madelon had been taught something of this art by the necessities of her early life; but she felt herself oppressed by her misfortunes and bewildered at the incomprehensible facts by which she was confronted. In her passion of grief and anger she endeavored to solve the problem set before her by her mere reason, and in her egotism forgot Heaven. The

courageous spirit of the dead soldier animated his child. If she was filled with doubts and bitterness, she was ignorant of despair.

"It is strange," she said, "that my father should have been taken from me just as his honorable service was recognized—just as he had secured in this household an asylum for his old age!—Strange that Monsieur Baudin should have been stricken down by grief at the loss of his fortune!—Strange that Julie, through no act of hers, should be expelled this house, adorned by her taste, and very dear to her! Strange that Marot's fate should be involved in such uncertainty!"

Then a burning tear traced its way down her cheek, and another, and another, and she bowed her head and a flood of tears came to her relief. For two months she had had no tidings of him, only a rumor that he had fallen into the hands of the Austrians, then another ghastly, but doubtful story, that he was among the slain.

Her head sank lower and lower; she fell upon her knees, and when she rose up the light of hope, and faith, and a serene resolve shone on her beautiful

forehead. The darkness had fallen. Madelon roused up the dying fire, and began to pace her room. She unbound the masses of her hair, threw off her funereal weeds, lighted the wax candles on her dressing table, and looked long in her mirror. But there was a chaste severity in her air which told that she was not prompted by a mere impulse of vanity. Her aspect was that of a student pondering a grave question, rather than that of a young girl gazing at her own fair image.

Suddenly her eyes kindled with a celestial fire. She clasped her hands, and cried out in a tone of exquisite sincerity:

"Je n'adore qu'un Dieu, maitre de l' univers,
Sous qui tremblent le ciel, la terre, et les enfers;
Un Dieu qui, nous aimant d' une amour infinie,
Voulut mourir pour nous avec ignominie;
Et qui, par un effort de cet exces d' amour,
Veut pour nous en victime etre offert chaque jour."

As she stood at the end of her quotation from that famous play of Cornille's, to which it was objected by the splendid people of his day that it had too much religion in it, she looked like one inspired, and realized in her noble attitude and illuminated face all that the

painters of the church have dreamed of Faith incarnate.

The glow faded from her forehead, her hands fell beside her, and the expression of her face became composed and meditative.

"Yes," said she, speaking aloud, "Yes, I could do it. The career offers great rewards and is open before me."

At that moment the voice of her cousin penetrated the room. "Madelon," she cried, "Madelon, are you deaf that you do not hear me? Open, my child, I would speak with you."

It was true Madame Baudin had been knocking unheard and unnoticed at the door. A blush came into Madelon's cheeks as she hastened to answer the summons of her cousin. Obeying this command she beheld Madame Baudin wrapped in a heavy shawl.

"Julie," cried Madelon, "you have anticipated me. I need your advice."

"Ah," said Madame Baudin, "I am incapable, I fear, for I am unable to answer my own questions, the chief of which is: what shall we do?"

"It is that question which I have answered," replied

Madelon. "Listen. I will go upon the stage. I will take up your old profession. I will labor to succeed, and I feel that within me that promises success."

Madame Baudin's pale face flushed. Her old dream was revived, but she checked the warm approval which was rising to her lips, and answered.

"It is a hard life, my child, the rewards are glittering, but they are for the few. And, then, your father's prejudice. Have you forgotten that?"

"I have thought of all these things, and my father retracted his harsh opinion. He discussed the question more than once after we came under your roof. I shall have a clear conscience."

"Then," cried Madame Baudin, "I think you may make a career for yourself. My old master—the good Cenis, whom you know—will instruct you for my sake."

And pacing slowly the ample chamber, these two fair women talked until long after cock-crow, and the future seemed less dreary as they began to realize that they would not be without an occupation, for Julie renewed her own career, even in thinking of that which was opening before her cousin.

CHAPTER XIX.

FIVE MONTHS AFTER.

Five months have passed since Madelon had determined to devote her genius to the stage. Julie, she and Monsieur Cenis were together in the grand *salon*. The visitor had been Madame Baudin's teacher, and had for twenty weeks devoted himself to Madelon as his favorite pupil. He was tall, stately, and devoted to his art. This was to him what the tri-color was to the French soldier. Its conquests in his eyes were the most splendid which genius could achieve. To him life was the play, the play was the reality. Possessed as he was of personal grace, a good education, and a complete mastery of his profession, Madelon could have found no better teacher than her cousin's old Master. Classic in his taste and cultivation, he yet had independence enough to follow the example which Baron

had set in a previous age, and had emancipated himself from much of the rigid mechanism which so long impeded the action of the French players. Such was Monsieur Cenis as an artist.

Personally he was light-hearted, humane, and devoted to Madame Baudin, whose course he had watched with the fondness of a parent, and the carefulness of a critic.

"The Theatre," said he, "offers great rewards. It is one of those places of which one never grows weary. It assists the illusions of youth; it stimulates the memory of age; it is a benefaction to all. It is there, Mademoiselle," addressing himself to Madelon, with a grand bow, "it is there that you will make a career for yourself."

"And you are satisfied with your pupil?" asked Madame Baudin, with a smile of pleasure lighting up her dark face.

"Satisfied!" cried he, spreading abroad his hands, "Satisfied! I am enchanted! She has elements of great success. In the first place she is beautiful," here he made another bow.

"Fie! Monsieur Cenis," cried Madelon, with a blush, "you will make me vain!"

"A woman without vanity," was the sententious answer, "is a woman—who is dead: what I say is true, you are handsome. If I were young I should call you a Goddess, and, my little one, this is a great point in your favor. Beauty has carried many an actress through when her genius and her art failed her. Then—you see I am like a Notary, going item by item through a bill—then you have a wonderful voice—a voice which ought to be a fortune of itself."

"Nay," cried Madelon, "if you continue, your Goddess must spread her wings and take flight!"

"Hold!" cried Monsieur, "one moment longer! This is business in plain prose and candor which I talk. I am but showing you my calculations. As I was saying, you have a superb voice, and this is the link between the actor and his audience. It is true we are told that Le Kain was unfortunate in this, but by study he overcame the defect. In your case Nature has richly endowed you, and more than this, my child, she has given you that which conquers all defects—

genius informed by suffering. Madame Baudin, you have asked for my opinion: In one word Mademoiselle's success is certain."

Convinced that her Master, as he said, was making a calculation of the elements on which he relied for success in his pupil, Madelon had listened to his praises with blushing cheeks and a heart that palpatated with pleasure.

"And how long, Monsieur Cenis, before I can begin the career of which you kindly predict so much?" she asked.

"Ah!" said her Master, "that depends. I think we might almost venture now. Your genius is great, and to-day I have an appointment with a high personage, and I shall not leave him until our plan is completed. Ah! my child, Cenis has never had a pupil to fail! Never; not once has Cenis been defeated. Cenis is too wise to expend his learning, his experience, his genius on one unworthy of it. For Cenis to say, 'I have a young friend who will adorn the theatre,' is for Cenis to secure an engagement for that young friend. Ah, they all know Cenis, and they say Cenis

never fails! His campaigns are like those of the Emperor, planned in the closet, and invincible in practice! But you must come into the city. Let this be soon. Then we will complete our arrangements. And now," said the Master, rising, "I must back to Paris to my appointment. It is my apology that I go, ladies, upon your service."

With many bows, Monsieur Cenis withdrew, and left Madelon and Julie warmed by the hopes inspired by his words. Madame Baudin felt that these were not without foundation, for she knew her old Master to be as candid in his criticisms as he was enthusiastic in his art, and her own judgment of Madelon's genius for the stage confirmed that of the veteran actor.

CHAPTER XX.

A GLIMPSE OF MAROT.

Monsieur Cenis, who spoke of himself with the frank egotism for which he found ample warrant in the writings of some of the great dramatists of his country, did not overrate his influence and authority. The Theatre Francois received his dicta with respect. Talma was his friend, and he had truthfully said that the pupils of Cenis made no failures. In Madelon's case she had, as her Master declared, genius "informed by suffering," and his instructions had been followed with laborious assiduity by his fair pupil. In her studies she found occupation and escape from the terrible suspense in which she lived. A year had passed since the departure of Marot, and she still remained in doubt whether he had been slain upon the field, or carried off captive into Russia.

Lavoison had made diligent enquiry, and his road always divided itself in this manner, one leading to

the grave, the other to the prison, or the mines. Thus these two stories had reached her, and she was alternately divided between hope and resignation. She found her chief consolation in the society of Father Paul and Madame Baudin, and never grew weary of studying Polyeucte, in which she found an expression of faith that sustained her in her struggles. As to the real fate of Marot there need be no mystery: A dramatic surprise is hardly possible without the illusions of the stage, and the penetration of the reader has without doubt arrived at the conclusion that Fate destined him to reappear upon our stage, where he has been little better than a shadow since the remarkable birth-day *fete* of Madame Baudin, when he marched for the Rhine, with the troops of the "Army of England," with which the Emperor had hoped to add the part of William of Normandy to his role of Charlemange. In that bitter experience he realized very fully the change in his position. He had once moved mounted—he was now on foot; he had ridden at the head of his regiment, he now stepped out in the ranks; he had worn a sword, he now

carried a musket. In one sense he felt his degradation; but he was sustained by hope and a profound conviction that so great an injustice could not long go unredressed. Above all, he had originally fought his way up from the ranks, and still felt that he might carry the traditional baton of a Marshal of France in his knapsack. He knew that Bravard was his enemy, but his frank and honest nature rendered him incapable of understanding the calculating animosity of his commander. His letters to Madelon, thanks to Bravard and Desselais, had never reached their destination; but ignorant of this, he accepted his fate with a stout heart, and did his duty with heroic devotion. It was his fortune to have in General Vespasien, the Commandant of his Division, an old friend and comrade in arms, and with the death of Bravard his rise was as rapid and as splendid as his fall had been sudden and undeserved. At last he had fallen into the hands of the Russians, and had been sent by a barbarous Prince to work in the mines upon his estate. It was this story, true but unauthenticated, which had reached his friends, who were alternately divided be-

tween hope and fear as to the fate of the gallant soldier. But he was not destined to remain long in his degrading captivity, as the reader of this short history will see in due season.

CHAPTER XXI.

A SHIP COMES HOME FROM SEA.

The day after the visit of Monsieur Cenis a *fiacre*, evidently from Paris, drove into the grounds of the villa where Madame Baudin still remained. Monsieur Causal was its occupant. He was still the man of parchment in appearance; but there was a warm heart in the bosom of the little Notary, and a smile of great satifaction lighted up his countenance. As his keen eyes roved over the scene, he noted that the wide avenue along which he rolled began to show signs of neglect; and descending at the marble steps of the great entrance, now little used, he observed that the stately house looked sad and desolate. Standing beneath the gilded ceiling of the grand *salon* he saw in the sombre and deserted aspect of the room a sharp antithesis to its former pomps and gayeties.

Here Louison found the good Notary engaged in studying the porfrait of his former patron, the rich

banker, who had not been able to support the loss of fortune. There were tears in the old man's eyes when the girl spoke to him:

"My mistress," said Louison, dropping a courtesy, "will be happy to receive Monsieur Causal in her Bourdoir, if he will follow me."

"Lead on, my good girl," said the Notary, blowing his nose with violence, "I follow you with pleasure."

Louison traversed the *salon*, crossed a wide hall, ascended a rich stairway, which had cost the dead banker thousands and thousands of francs, and pausing, tapped at a door, which immediately flew open. On the threshold stood Madame Baudin, behind her appeared Madelon.

"My friend," said the stately widow, with a kindly warmth that gave full meaning to her words, "my friend, you are welcome."

"And I," said the Notary, bowing low over her white hand, "I am glad to be here."

In the centre of the apartment stood a table covered with books and embroidery. To this Monsieur Causal drew himself a chair. When Madame Baudin had

seated herself, he followed her example, and drew forth a package from the bosom of his coat—Monsieur Causal was never without a bundle of papers—inspected it carefully, waved his large handkerchief, coughed, bowed, and began:

"I have already explained to you that my excellent friend, your lamented husband, left his affairs in a sad state." Here he paused, shook his head, and thought over that marriage settlement, which he had not been permitted to draw.

"Yes," said Madame Baudin, "in a sad state."

Monsieur Causal bowed and resumed: "I explained to you—it is now more than five months since—that, as then advised, there remained to you the sum of 15,750 francs of your husband's great fortune."

Here he paused again, and arranged the papers on the table, looked at them with a glance of approval, for they were to him in talking of business what his model is to the painter, and then resumed: "Since that time I have been at work. Yes, my dear friend, at very pleasant work, and I am now able to report an improved condition in your affairs."

The Notary smiled, Madame Baudin's face flushed, and Madelon drew near the table.

"Yes!" cried Monsieur Causal, with sparkling eyes and great animation, "yes, one of those ships, which we long thought lost, came in at last. She escaped the perfidious English. Her cargo of saltpetre was sold under my own eyes for a great sum—yes, a great sum."

At this reflection the good Notary seemed doubtful whether he would laugh or cry. The two women listened in profound emotion, but in silence.

"Now, then," continued Monsieur Causal, "this money added to that previously accounted for will leave you, above your husband's debts, 100,000 francs."

Here the good Notary wiped his eyes, turned away his head, and finally rose up and affected to look out at an opposite window. His two listeners fell into each other's arms, and Louison, listening at the keyhole, gave a little cry of joy.

Half an hour after this scene, Monsieur Causal was seated between his fair friends, making a modest

repast before taking his way back to Paris. Each one of the little group was animated with unexpected happiness, and the very cap of Louison seemed to tremble with suppressed laughter. Monsieur Causal at last finished his account of the ship which had escaped the perils of the sea, and with a bow to his fair companions offered to refill their glasses. In reply Madame Baudin interposed her fair hand, and Madelon shook her glossy head.

"Your news," cried Madame Baudin, "is wine enough for me."

"Then," said the Notary, "you will permit me to drink your health again. I am not used to riding, and have been excited."

Hereupon he drank his wine with great satisfaction, for the deceased banker had been a man of taste and judgment. Setting down his glass Monsieur Causal resumed: "But I have not finished my story. You must come to Paris. It is this which I advise."

"Ah!" exclaimed Madame Baudin, "I remember when I thought it would break my heart to leave it, but now I shrink from returning to the great city.

But I am sensible you are right. Only yesterday my old friend Cenis was here, and urged this upon me. Indeed, it is necessary for Madelon."

"The advice of Cenis was sound," said the Notary, "and I will show you reason for taking it, apart from that he gave you. And this will end my story. There is a man in Paris with mountains of money, made in the manufacture of powder. The sale of our saltpetre brought us in contact. He is called Chatard. Now he has a fancy for this chateau. You have the right to occupy it for two years longer. He is willing to buy, and to pay a good sum to gain possession. If you agree you will improve your fortune, and I have an understanding with him, that if you consent the keeper's cottage shall remain in your possession till the expiration of that time, so that you can make an occasional holiday should you grow weary of Paris in a new acquaintance with your old dwelling-place. The terms are good—even generous, though Chatard seems to be a pompous ass—Cenis needs his pupil near him, and, finally, I advise you to accept the offer."

"Dear friend," said Madame Baudin, "your advice is a command. Finish this as you will."

"Then," cried the Notary, I have my reward. Madame Causal and myself beg you and Madelon to come under our roof. We have an entire floor which we can give you."

The decision was soon made. Monsieur Causal finished his wine and rose up to depart.

"My wife," said he, "will be a happy woman when I tell her of your consent."

The two ladies and Louison, all radiant with smiles, followed him to the *fiacre*, and waved him adieu as he drove away, the happiest Notary in all France, for he felt that he had paid a debt of gratitude to his dead benefactor in the person of his wife. On his way he met Lavoison, and a shrewd smile lit up the face of Causal as he recognized the bright countenance of that young gentleman.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE PLOTTER.

A month had passed. Causal and Cenis met on the quiet street in which the Notary resided. The man of science, Causal—who held the law to be the chief of all sciences—and the man of art, Cenis—who held the art of elocution to be above all other arts, so that they might be added to the group of tutors who surrounded Monsieur Jundain—had met frequently of late, for Madame Baudin and Madelon were now lodged under the roof of the good Notary. The two old men exchanged salutes, stopped and engaged in conversation. The one was practical and sedate, the other vain and even fantastic, yet they seemed to find themselves mutually interested. This was not unnatural, as they spoke of Madelon.

"Yes," cried Cenis, in reply to Causal, "yes, she will make a grand success! Madelon has genius, and

beauty and patience, and these three conquer the world. In another week she will be famous. Yes, it is I, Cenis, who say it! She will be renowned!"

As he spoke with great vivacity, and in an exalted voice, a passenger paused, listened, and then with a muttered oath hurried away.

"An ill-looking fellow!" said Cenis, with an air of indignation,

"Yes," replied Causal, "I have seen him frequently of late in this neighborhood. He goes early to the wine shops, if his face does not belie him."

The stranger disappeared, and the old men separated. It was Desselais who passed them and uttered an oath in comment on the prediction of Cenis. He hurried onward, crossed the river on the Pont Royal, turned into the Rue de Rivoli, and finally entered a lofty and pretentious house, which had been the residence of his father, now dead, the once famous contractor. He hurried to his apartments on the second floor. Here he began to pace to and fro with rapid steps, like a caged wild beast. His appearance was greatly altered. The fop had degenerated into the

debauche. His clothes, though fine in texture and of costly material, were thrown on with a careless air. His cheeks were inflamed and swollen; his thick hair showed a few gray threads; his eyes were sunken, blood-shot, and suspicious. From time to time he looked over his shoulder as he walked. You saw at a glance that he sacrificed to Bachus rather than the Graces. He consulted his watch with impatience, stamped upon the floor, gazed out at the windows; evidently he expected a visitor. At intervals he withdrew into an inner apartment. There he no longer consulted his mirror, or arranged his hair, as was his delight to do in other days; but, in place of these frivilous indulgences, he soothed his irritated nerves by deep potations from a decanter filled with brandy. Evidently he was going to the Devil at a gallop with Atra Cura mounted *en croupe*. At last a knock came at the outer door. Desselais sprang forward and threw it open. The person who entered was a man of middle years. His rigid attitude showed he had been a soldier. His face was cunning, his manner servile. In brief, he had been the confidential servant

of General Bravard. He saluted Desselais with military precision and entered the apartment.

"*Peste!*" cried Desselais, "*Peste!* You have kept me waiting till I am nearly mad!" and he stamped upon the floor in unreasoning anger.

"Pardon me, Monsieur," said the man, "I am here at the hour."

"And you have the papers?" shouted Desselais—"the papers?—the papers?"—and he danced about in a frenzy as he asked the question.

"Yes, Monsieur," was the answer, "I have the papers. They are here." As he spoke he drew a package from his bosom.

"It is a happy chance that you kept them!" cried Desselais.

"Not chance, Monsieur," was the blunt reply. "Not chance; it was good to have these papers, for Monsieur will observe that General Bravard, had he lived, might have forgotten a faithful servant."

"The cunning of the fox and the mercy of the wolf!" ejaculated Desselais, with something of the air which belonged to him when the *salon* was the chief

theatre of his ambition. Saying this, he stretched forth his hand. The man remained immovable. A deep flush overspread the face of Desselais. He wrenched open, rather than unlocked, a drawer in his writing table, and threw upon it a handful of notes and coins.

"I understand!" he said, with a bitter laugh. "There, oh! faithful servant of an honest master, count out thy ill-gotten gains, and may the gold be a curse to thee!"

The man surrendered the papers. Desselais seized them with trembling fingers and gazed upon them with eyes which flamed like those of Pizzaro when he looked upon the Inca's ransom. To him they were of great value. They promised, such was his brutal temper, a chance of winning Madelon, whom he alternately adored or execrated. He said to himself, if she were once assured of her lover's death, that he might buy her person, if not win her heart. He had heard the story of Baudin's misfortunes. He knew that she and Madame Baudin were beneath the roof of Causal, and he said, in his wicked heart: "The cunning

Notary will absorb all the remains of the wreck, and then bid them seek another asylum." In that hour he hoped to make his wealth avail him in gratifying his headlong passion. The papers which he now greedily devoured were Madelon's letters to Marot and his in answer. These Bravard had intercepted to win the favor of his cousin. As he examined them a smile of savage exultation lit up his distorted countenance.

"At last!" he cried, "at last! Dead! Dead! I can now prove that which was doubtful, and"—here turning upon the man who still waited, he abruptly said:

"You have your money."

"A thousand thanks, Monsieur!" was the reply.

"The sum is right?"

The man bowed.

"Then," cried Desselais, "begone! But remember I may need you further in this comedy of mine. You can steal, and therefore lie?"

"Yes," was the unmoved reply, "when it is to my interest."

And with a low bow the man withdrew

Desselais closed and locked the door, flung himself in a chair, and pondered over his plan of campaign.

His thoughts ran somewhat thus: "I can produce her own letters to Marot. The tale tells itself. They were found upon his person when he fell. He died in battle disfigured beyond recognition, save for these. Then, this girl who drives me mad with her beauty and her scorn, hopes to make a career upon the stage. That must be defeated, and the way is clear. Madame Baudin is ruined beyond hope. This cunning fox of a Notary will devour the little that remains to her, and the career of Madelon on the stage being broken, she will be homeless and at my mercy. Yes, it turns upon that! If I can crush her in the theatre she will have no refuge—then my star will rise again!"

Thinking thus, Desselais sprang up, seized his hat and crying out, "so much for the plan! now for the execution!" dashed down the stairway and hurried off in the direction of the Palais Royal.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE PLAY.

Paris had never been more brilliant. Her coffers were filled with wealth; her arsenals, her churches, her palaces were enriched with the spoils of Europe. The Emperor had expended more than 30,000,000 francs in embellishing the city. His despotism "*tempere par une chanson*" was splendid in purple, and the song was tremulous with a passionate delight.

Paris wrapped herself in the purple, and her voice swelled the melody to its highest pitch. She was intoxicated with success, and reeled in a delirium of pleasure. Never had the gay capital been gayer. The festivities and pomps of the Court of Louis XIV were for the few, those of the Emperor were, in comparison, for the many. Scions of the old nobility, and the men who were the sons of their own works, strove together to win the Imperial favor. Paris believed herself destined to occupy the place once held by

Rome, and already affected the air of mistress of the world. Her volatile population were drunk with dreams of wealth and power. Her children devoted themselves to the contemplation of glory and the study of pleasure. The theatre flourished. Talma was the friend of the Emperor. The Muses and Graces divided with Mars and Bellona the public homage.

These were the gilded days in which sentinels guarding the approaches to the Opera House cried out, on occasion: "*Monsieur cocher, si votre maitre n'est pas roi vous n'y passerez pas.*"

In this atmosphere, glittering with light, resounding with laughter, tremulous with music, and heavy with perfume, Monsieur Cenis was happy. He was an authority in his art, the familiar friend of great men, an oracle, and the oracle had its numerous worshipers. He did not exaggerate his power when he said that his voice opened the doors of the theatre, that his prediction of success upon the boards was but the anticipated verdict of the people. Nor did he hesitate to say as much for himself on slight occasion. But on the night when he again comes upon our

mimic stage there was a method in his vanity. He had a special and kindly object in immediate view, when he repeated to Madame Baudin and Madelon the old, familiar story, that a pupil of his had never failed.

The three, attended by the faithful Louison, were standing in the dressing room allotted to the *debutante.* It was not the cheerless apartment we would have seen at that date in an Engiish theatre; but it was rich in pictures and gilding, and gorgeous—just a little too gorgeous in coloring for the perfection of taste which belongs to the French people.

The florid fancy of the Duc de Richelieu had left an indelible impression on the Theatre Francaise, and the room in which they stood had once been approved by that great personage in the days when he ruled the strange and feverish world which palpitated behind the curtain.

Madame Baudin was pale and nervous, but Madelon's cheeks were flushed, and her splendid eyes shone with the courageous spirit she inherited from her father. Her figure was erect, her voice was steady,

and her pulse even. As for Monsieur Cenis, that amiable man was in a state of feverish delight.

"Ah!" he cried, tapping Madelon gently on the shoulder, "ah! this is excellent! You have the self-mastery, the composure, the command of faculties! You shall make a grand reputation! I shall behold you as the Emperor beholds a young general who wins victory! Yes, my little one, our success will be superb! All Paris is here. The Minister of War has spoken of you, and assists at the performance. The house is full of decorations and great personages. Cenis hears on all sides your praises in advance, and Mon Dieu! to-morrow all Paris will be in rapture!"

At this picture Monsieur Cenis skipped about the room in an ecstacy, fairly intoxicated with the vintage trodden out by the feet of hope and fancy. He believed his predictions, and loved his pupil with paternal tenderness. He loved himself, also, with a fervor which, as the good reader has seen, was never at a loss for artless phrases of self-praise and admiration. And he had not greatly exaggerated the temper of the audience. He had great influence, and this had

been laboriously used. Then he knew his pupil had rare beauty, and this had been made known in a multitude of ways. Her sad, romantic story had been told in a thousand places, with a thousand variations, and had lost none of its pethetic interest in the narration. Finally, the play was Cornille's master piece, and all Paris had assembled to see the new Chimene. As Monsieur Cenis finished his perouette, a knock sounded on the gilded pannels of the door. For that agile person to open it, which he did in a very cautious manner, was but the work of a moment. His air of reserve was immediately changed, and he cried out:

"Ah! here are friends who come to share our triumph!" So speaking he admitted Causal and Lavoison.

The little Notary was more gallant in appearance, and less professional in aspect, than his best friends had ever seen him. He had permelled himself a gigantic boquet, and his hair was dressed and powdered to a miracle.

The Surgeon shone in a costume fitted to the occasion, and was flushed with excitement, in which all but Madelon participated.

She was composed as marble. A hum and buzz penetrated the apartment. The theatre was full. In five minutes the curtain would rise, and the first words of the play spoken by Chimene. She looked equal to the task. Her rich costume was faultless in its minutest details, and her beauty never shone with a greater splendor. As she spoke with Causal, another knock sounded on the door: "A note for Mlle. Deslond from an old friend."

Mechanically Madelon took the paper from the hands of Cenis. As her eyes ran over its few and cruel words, her cheeks turned of a deadly pallor. Slowly, and with a strange air of deliberation, she handed it to Madame Baudin. A sudden silence fell upon the group. They felt themselves, as it were, already in the shadow of a calamity. As the paper swam before her eyes Madame Baudin read:

"I have an interest in your fortunes which your disdain cannot shake. I have devoted my life to your service, and knowing your desire to learn the fate of Marot, I hasten to inform you of his end] I have found a man who saw him dead on the field. I send you one of your letters taken from his person, by which he was identified."

This brutal note went from hand to hand. Its enclosure Madelon slowly folded away in her bosom.

"*Scelerat!*" cried Lavoison, his eyes flaming with passion. "This is the writing of Desselais. He is the author of this outrage, and he shall answer it!"

Cenis, who knew the history of Madelon, was in despair. He saw his pupil profoundly moved, and the critical moment was at hand when she must face her audience.

"My child!" cried the old man, wringing his hands, "my child, it is a base lie! It is the invention of your enemy. Drive it from your mind! Mon Dieu! revenge yourself upon him by success!"

This masculine appeal was not without its influence on Madelon. The act was that of a dastard. Her spirit rose in resistance. Indeed, there was a strange, sweet sorrow in her heart at holding in her bosom a precious memento of her dead lover. Her color came with a sudden rush. Her eyes kindled. Her form dilated. She looked around upon the agitated group by which she was surrounded, and cried out in a

steady voice, but a voice pervaded by the profoundest passion:

"Fear not, dear friends! I am familiar with sorrow. This sudden pang was sharp. It is hard to give up hope, but trust me to-night to show this cruel men that I can defy his malice."

"Mon Dieu!" cried Cenis, whose keen intelligence now recognized in the incident an element of success, "Mon Dieu! we are saved! Your spirit will triumph, and a just heaven will vindicate the right!"

And the old man folded Causal in a sudden embrace. This strange scene behind the curtain, so full of meaning for those who beheld it, was, indeed, a fortunate preparation of Madelon for the ordeal she had to undergo. It might have been fatal, but her courageous temper had conquered. In place of being shattered by the blow, it had stirred emotions which identified her with her part. She had already ceased to be Madelon—she was already *Chemene*. Their strange conference was broken. The curtain was up. The audience waited. As she swept upon the stage, in beauty glorified by the sorrows of her young life, a

murmur of admiration rose from the vast assembly. The play, which the great Cardinal, that puller-down of Kings and builder-up of Kingdoms, could not destroy, began. At once her voice conveyed to the whole audience the meaning of her part. Just as the colors of a painter bring before us the creations of his fancies, her tone presented the passions of her role as the piece progressed. When she came to her reply, in the first act, to the long speech of Eline and exclaimed:

"Et dans ce grand bonheur je crains un grand revers,"

the pent-up sorrows of her life, whose dreams of happiness had been shattered, found expression in her tones, and even Cenis wept as he listened.

"Bis! Bis! Bis!" resounded through the vast audience. The applause rose like a tempest, and from that moment through to the end she held the theatre beneath the spell of her genius and her sorrows. She had risen far above Art and the traditions of Art, and it was to Nature that the multitude paid the homage of their tears, and raptures of applause.

Among those in the parterre most moved by the

play was the wretched Desselais. He had deliberately contrived a plot to destroy Madelon's career. He had executed it with devilish skill; but her marvellous acting, which was not acting, had transported him beyond the bounds of reason. He wept, he called down imprecations upon himself, he was wild in leading the applause, and when the piece was over he struggled out through the great throng like a madman; and at three o'clock the next morning he was taken home in a fit of delerium.

The emotions of Madame Baudin, of Cenis, of Causal and Lavoison were intense, but different in each according to their age, their temper, and their interest in Madelon. They understood, none so well as her cousin, at what a prodigious cost—by what preliminary sorrows she had achieved success, and the tears which Madame Baudin shed on the bosom of the triumphant actress when the play was ended, were those one weeps over the sorrows of a friend, rather than the pleasant showers which attest great joy at a triumph.

Cenis alone was completely happy. He forgot the

cost and looked only at the result. His eyes shone like diamonds, his chest expanded, his form was erect, his step alert, his air animated, and his voice tremulous with delight.

"My child!" he cried, "Child of my care, daughter of my labors, crown of my fame! Your success is unbounded! Your career is made!"

Then, in a happy inspiration, he chanted, rather than declaimed before the little group, that famous couplet from the pen of Boileau—

"En vain contre Le Cid un ministre se liegue,
Tout Paris pour Chimene a les yeux de Rodrique."

CHAPTER XXIV.

"IS ALL OUR COMPANY HERE?"

The success of Madelon had been complete. She had leaped at once into celebrity, and a brilliant fortune was assured her. She had undergone a great trial, but her strength was unimpaired. Occupation even carried to the point where it becomes fatigue, was a relief to her. Her profession gave ease to the troubles of her mind; but her sorrow was not without its serenity. The long struggle between hope and dread was ended. She knew the worst, and found that she could bear it. She had developed wonderfully in the school in which Misfortune had been her tutor. Her strong, practical sense had rejected the idea of an aimless life; her aspirations remained, but her's was not a selfish ambition. In her plans for the future the good Priest, singularly wise and liberal, as we have seen, was to be her almoner. Her scheme,

already fashioned out in her own mind, was to devote her genius to the service of the poor, to accumulate wealth for the foundation of some noble charity. She busied herself in her leisure moments in trying to adjust to her well-founded hopes of fortune the details of a scheme for the protection of young girls thrown upon the world without means of support. Talma himself had declared his admiration of her genius and predicted opulence as its reward, and she was already rich when her simple wants were compared with the sums which the delighted Cenis had paid on her account to the good Notary. In maturing this plan, she had already consulted Causal, the Priest, and Madame Baudin, all of whom sympathized with her generous aspirations, and applauded her good intentions. And—such are the mysteries of life!—this great revolution in her hopes and prospects had been wrought in a single month. From the night when she appeared as Chimene to the hour of which we speak, little more than four weeks had passed by the calendar; but in emotions and results they had been years.

During this time Lavoison had become an avowed suitor for the hand of the beautiful widow, and it was well understood that, in due season, she was to exchange her weeds for orange blossoms.

Desselais had been ill, even to the point of death, but had again emerged from his house in the Rue de Rivoli more reckless, if possible, than ever.

Cenis was still engaged in praising Madelon and her tutor.

The little Notary was busy in arranging the affairs of Madame Baudin, and his excellent wife, who, being childless, had ample room in heart, was happy in studying the happiness of the two fair women who had found a shelter beneath her roof.

The clocks of Paris had tolled the hour of noon, the three ladies were together. They were interrupted in their languid talk by a gentle rap upon the door.

"Enter," cried Madame Baudin, and in obedience to her command Monsieur Causal presented himself.

"Welcome, my friend," said the fair widow, rising and extending her hand, "welcome. You have come in good time, for I fear we made but a dull company."

"Perhaps it may prove that I come in good time, as you say," said the Notary, "for I am here to propose an excursion to-morrow. The weather is glorious, and a day at the chateau would be a pleasure to us all."

"It would be charming," cried Madame Baudin, "but, then, we would be taking you away from your parchments and your papers?"

"Not so," said the Notary. "It happens that I have business there. To-morrow Monsieur Chatard makes me the last payment for the property. You are still entitled, under our agreement to the keeper's cottage, and that, as you know, is pretty and commodious. There we can have a charming day, and I know a learned Judge whose carriage I can command so that we may go in state. Decide, then, and answer; shall we spend to-morrow in the country?"

"Yes," cried Madelon, "yes, let us go! I long for the trees, and the fields, and the river in the distance. Let us go and breathe the fresh air for one day, Julie."

"So be it," said Madame Baudin, "to-morrow, Monsieur Causal, we shall be at your command."

"Then," said the Notary, "I will make my preparations."

"And I also," cried his wife, "for we must make it a *fete* day."

Saying this she left the room, followed by Monsieur Causal.

They had hardly withdrawn when Louison entered. "Mademoiselle," she said, "Father Paul is in the *salon*, and awaits you."

Madelon rose and followed the girl, while Madame Baudin, left to herself, fell into a little dream of a day in the country, with the figure of Lavoison in the midst of her pastoral romance.

"My good father," said Madelon, as she held out her hands to the venerable priest, "I am glad to see you. You have come to tell me of the tablet?"

"Yes," replied the old man. "In a few days you shall inspect it. It is strong and simple—a type of the character of the dear friend whose virtues it will commemorate."

"Father," said Madelon, and her voice trembled, "let the inscription be simple. Let it contain his

name and rank, and let it say in modest words that he died like a brave man in the service of his country."

The tears came into her eyes; her lips quivered; she walked to a window; when she turned the Priest was gone.

Hardly had she regained her apartment when Lavoison was announced as a visitor for Madame Baudin. The fair widow blushed over brow, and cheeks and neck as she joined her lover.

"Madame," said he, "I have great news for you"—

"It must be pleasant, if I am to believe your face," she answered.

"You shall judge for yourself," said Lavoison, his face radiant with smiles; and he took the soft white hand of the widow in both his own while he told his story.

What Lavoison's story was we leave untold; but it is certain that he was very long in its narration. At last he left the house. Almost on the threshold he met Causal.

"Ah!" cried the Notary, "you are the man above all others whom I desired to see!" and forthwith he

began to unfold his plans for the morrow's holiday, in which it was set down that Lavoison was to make one of the little company at the keeper's cottage. Although engaged with their own affairs, they had leisure to observe the misadventure of a foot-passenger near them. He was a sharp-eyed, sharp-nosed fellow, only lacking a tail to make him an admirable rat, who had just dropped near them a package of small coins. These he now picked up with a murmuring commentary of oaths on his ill-fortune. Had they followed him they would have seen him accost Desselais in the garden of the Palais Royal. After a short conference they separated, and the wretched debauche plunged into a wine shop.

CHAPTER XXV.

UNDER THE TREES.

Imagine an improvement on Monsieur Jourdain, and you have a good idea of Monsieur Chatard. He had not employed a master of philosophy, but he knew perfectly well that he spoke prose, still, both stupid and vain, he was generally pronounced an ass. But stupid as he was, he could not have been improved on by any Mamanouchi. He was enormously rich and aspired to social distinction. For this reason he had bought the chateau, and it was again the scene of as much gayety as in the days of the rich banker. The company which now thronged the chateau was of a different grade. The charm of Madame Baudin's beauty and wit had departed, and Chatard could hardly have assembled a stranger set of people than those who thronged his entertainments. He was sensible of this, and when by some happy chance a person

of celebrity was among his guests, he was as happy as Monsieur Jourdain when he received the son of the Grand Turc, and was enrolled among the dignitaries of the Porte. Consumed by vulgar ambition, Chatard was perpetually engaged in making improvements in house and grounds, and great sums had already been expended in decorations within and embellishments without. For the first time he found himself the owner of a splendid mansion, followed by the retinue of a great man, and he surrendered himself to the intoxication of his new position without reserve. But there was one thorn in his bed of roses—one obtrusive quill in his pillow of down. He found that, here and there, foot-paths had been trodden through his grounds. He was inflamed with violent anger at the discovery, and the walls surrounding the chateau were plackarded with notices threatening vengeance and the terrors of the law against all offenders. He affected to believe that his domains were invaded by poachers. This flattered his vanity, but the simple truth was Madame Baudin had permitted a few poor people to gather fagots within the grounds, and they

had left the foot-prints which disturbed the new proprietor. But Monsieur Chatard preferred to believe that the nearly extinct paths he had discovered were worn by dangerous marauders, and for want of better occupation fretted himself into a fever of annoyance over this trifle. At last a singularly happy idea, as he fancied, dawned upon his mind. On this he immediately acted, and therefore congratulated himself on the ingenuity of his contrivance. And to-day it so happened that, at the very hour when, with the sun already slanting towards the west, the little Notary's party drove through the gateway, Monsieur Chatard was upon his terrace thinking over the arrangements he had made to protect his seigneurial rights and dignity.

"*Peste!*" he cried, as he saw the carriage drive into his grounds and draw up at the keeper's cottage. "*Peste!* here we have the widow and her people. Let me see! Three women and two men. Mon Dieu, they have also a maid servant! and hampers and basket! This is an invasion that I never bargained for."

He was right in his enumeration. The borrowed

carriage in which they came was of English make, almost as big as a Lord Mayor's coach, and commodious enough to admit the Notary's company with ease. This threw Chatard into a passion, and his pink face grew purple. As he said, he regarded it as an invasion, and his first thought was to declare as much in person. On a moment's reflection he abandoned this idea, but determined that as his appointment with Causal was three hours distant, that he would not grant him an interview until the very second named for that business, little thinking in his vanity that that good man had no desire to intrude upon him sooner. Feeling thus, Monsieur Chatard assumed the attitude of a Colossus, thrust his hands into the pockets of his embroidered coat, wrinkled his brow in a heavy frown, and seemed to deliberate. Suddenly his face assumed an expression of relief.

"It is well," he said, "that fellow is reading my proclamation," and saying this he stalked away from the terrace as majestically as his short legs would permit.

It was true that Lavoison was examining, with no

little amusement, one of Chatard's notices, which, with singular bad taste, had been posted on a noble tree overhanging the cottage. This was so pompous in language, so elaborate and barbarous in tone, that, like a witness who proves too much, it was of little value as a warning against danger to trespassers, for its threats were too cruel to be credible. In fact, it was an absurd document, and Lavoison read it with sparkling eyes, and rippling laughter.

The keeper's cottage had never before held such a company. The fresh air had stimulated them; they were excited by the drive and scene. Madelon made a noble struggle to adapt herself to those about her, and enjoyed a serene pleasure in watching her cousin's happiness. Never had that fair dame been so radiant, never so tender to Madelon, and she seemed to throb with joy as a star palpitates with light. Causal, and his good wife, Madame Baudin and Lavoison kept up a flow of talk which did not permit a shadow to hover over the little company.

"It is a fine thing," said the Notary, "to be esteemed in one's profession, but I confess that half a

day is not what I had promised myself; but, ladies, a marriage settlement could not be postponed."

At this speech, which referred to the cause of their detention that morning in Paris, the Notary smiled archly, Madame Baudin blushed, and Lavoison looked supremely happy. The Cottage was soon inspected. It was a picturesque building, surmounting a wooded eminence, and there they admired the familiar scenery, while Louison was busy in laying the table for the carefully considered dinner, the composition of which Madame Causal had directed with the zeal and taste of the true Frenchwoman.

All good things come to an end. Louison had packed away the remains of the feast. The little company had done it justice, and the Notary held up his glass, for the wine still remained on the table. Happy man was Causal when he proposed his sentiment, miserable was he the moment after. He looked around, smiling upon his companions, and said, thinking of Cenis, who, alas! was sick: "There is one absent" —his toast died upon his lips, for he saw Madelon turn pale and start.

Madame Baudin became grave. Even Lavoison, as the seamen say, was taken aback by the contre-temps.

The Notary understood at a glance, but it was too late to amend his blunder. The words were spoken, and a cloud settled on the company, for Causal's speech brought up a sad and vivid picture of poor Marot. Thus situated, the Notary, who reproached himself bitterly for his thoughtless speech, was not long in attempting a diversion.

"See," he said, "the sun is towards the west. Our time draws to an end. I must pray you to excuse me while I settle an affair with Monsieur Chatard."

Thus speaking he hurried off toward the chateau to dance attendance for half an hour in the rich man's anti-chamber. It was true as he had said: A flood of yellow glory streamed over the landscape.

"It invites us to a walk," said Lavoison, casting a rapid glance over the wide and tranquil scene, "Come, let us enjoy our last moments under the trees."

Acting upon this invitation the company rose from

the table, and, while Madame Causal busied herself with Louison in preparing for the return, Lavoison and the two young ladies sauntered down the winding roadway.

CHAPTER XXVI.

FATE SUMS UP THE CASE.

The Surgeon talked only too volubly. It was plain that he was pouring out this copious stream of words under compulsion. Madame Baudin was pained, and silent, for she saw a look of deep distress settle like a mask of stone on the face of her unhappy cousin. Gradually Madelon dropped behind the fair widow and Lavoison. Presently she took a narrow path, thickly shaded by trees and shrubs, planted with an art which made them resemble the wilds of the forest. She longed to be alone, and hurried under the friendly shadow of the interwoven branches. With this secluded path she had long been familiar, and mechanically followed its devious windings. Her hands were clasped before her, her eyes were cast down and her head bowed upon her bosom. She reproached herself for having attempted to appear cheerful amid the scenes associated with her love of the dead soldier;

and the reaction in her feelings was in proportion to the effort she had made to bring herself in harmony with her companions. For this she now said she had been punished by the unhappy suggestion which had fallen from the lips of Causal. She recoiled from her own image, as she saw herself in her mind, with a feeling akin to horror. Thus thinking, and with her emotions pictured upon her face, she slowly followed the yellow path, but took no note of the scene about her. The lights and shadows danced in vain beneath her feet, for her eyes were filled with reproachful tears that streamed without constraint down her pale cheeks, and the quiver of her lips showed that a passion of sobs was only held back by a strong effort of her will. Her brave spirit surrendered itself for the moment to sorrow, and forgetting all her noble dreams and high emotions, she longed only to be at rest. When the young and strong long for death, they must, indeed, be unhappy!

Suddenly Desselais crossed her path. His face furnished a curious study of mingled emotions, and his eyes glittered with a sinister light. As he beheld the

tears upon Madelon's cheeks the insolence of his deportment was subdued. He had pictured her as happy in her success, but the utter wretchedness of her face and attitude excited his amazement, and awed him into moderation.

"Madelon," he said, in a hollow voice. At this address she looked up, but neither started nor drew back. They confronted each other a moment in unbroken silence. She felt sorrow rather than alarm or anger, as she looked on the shattered wreck of the man who had so often thrown a shadow across her life. As for Desselais a spell seemed upon him. His voice deserted him. He stood abashed and tremulous in her presence. He tried to make himself ashamed of his sense of shame for his unmanly obtrusion upon her grief. As they stood they made a good *tableau* under the shadowy trees. An artist would have said he saw the evil genius of the wood overawed by a chaste spirit from a better sphere. At last his eyes sunk under her steady gaze. Slowly, without a word, she turned upon her heel. The spell upon Desselais was broken. He cursed himself in his heart for his

momentary weakness. He sprang forward, the mere act gave him new spirit, his face flushed, his eyes glittered, his jaws were set, and he looked his part thoroughly, for he was a dissolute and hardened villain.

"Hear me, proud woman!" he cried, in a voice hoarse with passion. "Hear me you shall," and he seized her arm, but she flung him off. "Yes," he cried, "you shall listen. I am nearly mad. Nay, you shall not go!"

Again he sprang forward with a savage laugh and outstretched arms.

There was a blinding flash, a heavy detonation, and a cloud of white smoke enveloped them.

Desselais staggered and fell with a deep groan against the trunk of a lofty chestnut, mortally wounded by one of Monsieur Chatard's cunning devices to protect his grounds. Madelon lifted up her voice in a great cry. There came the sound of rapid feet, beating and pattering along the path, with a sound that told of haste and terror.

Madelon sank upon the grass. When she opened

her eyes her head was pillowed on the lap of Madame Baudin, and she saw Lavoison kneeling beside the dying desperado.

Desselais stared vacantly about him. He was slowly recovering from the prodigious shock which he had received. The group about him momentarily increased in numbers, for the alarm had been communicated with wonderful rapidity from the wood to the cottage, from the cottage to the chateau.

"Mon Dieu!" cried the beautiful widow, "this is terrible!"

"God! God!" said the wounded and dying man, "who speaks of God? This is His judgment—if there be a God; but only women and priests believe such tales."

And a ghastly sneer settled on his lips. Suddenly he raised himself-on his elbow, looked at Madelon, and cried out with something of generosity to gild his last moments:

"Behold! I brought this on myself. See there, that cord entangled with my foot"—

The blood gushed from his bosom and he fell back

exhausted in the arms of Lavoison. It was as he had said. The cord which had pulled the trigger of Chatard's heavily charged musketoon was tangled about his ankle, and the clumsy weapon itself, still reeking with smoke, visible where he had dragged it into view.

"Is there no hope?" asked Madame Baudin, in a voice in which pity and horror struggled for the mastery. "Is there no hope?"

"None," said the Surgeon. "None; he is in the very articles of death. Withdraw with Madelon from this wretched scene."

It required no professional skill to discover that Desselais was dying. His face was of a deadly white. His frame shivered from head to feet. A bloody foam gathered about his lips. His breath came in broken sobs. He stretched out his arms. His eyes rolled horribly, and then fixed themselves in a glassy stare. He struggled to rise and fell back dead in a pool of blood.

The bold, bad man had gone to his account, slain in the very midst of a premeditated villainy. The little group about his body, from which the ladies had withdrawn at the bidding of Lavoison, was frozen into

silence, and each new comer trod lightly as he approached the tragic scene.

Chatard, drawn thither by the outcry, and the vague report which had reached him, took one look at the victim of his brutal ingenuity, and fled from the spot aghast.

The Notary and Lavoison consigned the dead man to the crowd of servants who had gathered about the bloody spot, and hastened after the terrified women. These they hurried into their carriage, and in another moment were on their way back to Paris.

The yellow sunshine was fading. A great purple cloud floated above the city, and a silence, not often broken, hung over the Notary and his companions. His *fete* had turned into a funeral.

"Mon Dieu!" said the good man to himself, with a shudder, "this has been a sad holiday."

Fortunately their horses seemed to devour the distance. Causal's friend not only had an English carriage, but it was drawn by English bays of blood and mettle. The coachman obeyed his instructions, and drove at a rapid pace. At the barrier there was a

moment's halt. Here the face of Father Paul, radiant with happiness, appeared at the window.

"Ah!" he cried, in a cheerful voice—a voice so cheerful that it seemed almost a laugh—"you are here at last! And you have had a happy day? I trust its end may be even more charming!"

In answer to this Lavoison spoke a few words in a low voice to the priest, and then throwing open the door dismounted. Hurriedly he told his strange story to Father Paul, and then they seemed to debate a point between them. At the end of their discussion, Lavoison mounted upon the box beside the driver and the priest took his place in the carriage. The coach passed through the gateway, drove rapidly down a narrow street, and drew up at the desolate-looking yard of a stone-cutter.

"Here," said Father Paul, getting out nimbly, "here, Madelon, is something for your inspection."

She understood him and dismounted. She comprehended that she was to see the tablet dedicated to the memory of her lover.

The sun was setting, and the gloom of evening had

already gathered about the spot whose cheerless aspect was in harmony with her own feelings. Leaning upon the good priest's arm, she crossed the yard and entered the main work-shop. It was deserted save by a solitary man who seemed to have lingered longer than his fellows. Her companion drew her to a sculptured monument, which shone pale and ghost-like in the fading light.

"Here," said the priest, "is the tablet." "And here," said a tender voice, "is your Marot!"

The young soldier stepped forward, and with a great cry of joy, Madelon threw herself upon his bosom and burst into a flood of happy tears. * * *

Elba. Waterloo. St. Helena. These three words make up a grand history. That history has been written and the bloody volume closed. A group gathers on the terrace of the chateau. This, the wretched Chatard had sold, as he afterwards said, to the present owner, the little Notary, for a trifle. General Marot and his beautiful Madelon, Madame Lavoison and her husband, now famous in his profession, Causal and his wife are there. They listen to

Madame Marot, who tells in rapid words and in a tone of profound enthusiasm, how her school for girls has received a generous gift from the aged Cenis, and is flourishing in Paris under the special management of the good priest. As she speaks, the voices of happy children echo across the spreading lawns. The sun sets in the midst of purple and golden clouds. The tender stars gleam in the tranquil sky. One by one the lights disappear in the chateau. The terrace is deserted, and the night winds mingle their voices with the plash of the fountain.

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